





***BIG SANDY***

# Books by JEAN THOMAS

DEVIL'S DITTIES

THE TRAIPSIN' WOMAN

THE SINGIN' FIDDLER OF LOST HOPE HOLLOW

THE SINGIN' GATHERIN' (in collaboration with  
Joseph A. Leeder)

BALLAD MAKIN' IN THE MOUNTAINS OF KENTUCKY

BIG SANDY







Big Sandy View

JEAN THOMAS

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# BIG SANDY



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BY  
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To the memory of my father

**WILLIAM GEORGE BELL**

*kinsman of the first white man in Cumberland Gap*

*"Dr. Walker, the English chap"*

*and who first within my hearing said*

*"Big Sandy against the world"*



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## BIG SANDY CREW

Oh, they saddle up the horses and away they'll ride,  
They saddle up the horses and away they'll ride,  
First thing a courtship and they'll sit down;  
Jenny, think your Johnny-cake is bakin' most too brown.

They saddle up the horses and ride when they please  
Their old jeans pants up to their knees;  
Brogan shoes turned up at the toes,  
And big yarn socks was all the go.

Girls use no powder, but their face is red,  
Their hair done up on the back of their head.  
An old linsey dress, the color was brown,  
And the tail of it a-draggin' the ground.

It's good mornin' Nancy and hello John,  
Come over tonight and we'll parch some corn.  
We'll have some fun, I'll play you a tune,  
We'll get married about next June.

An old log house and a clapboard door,  
An old log house and a clapboard door,  
An old log house and a clapboard door,  
An old stone chimney and an old puncheon floor.

A homemade table and a corded bed,  
They had no stove but a skillet and lid.  
They rake out the ashes and throw in the dough,  
It's old corn dodger, don't you know?

Had a little cow and they milked her in the gourd,  
Set it in the corner, covered it with a board;  
Some got milk, some got none; that's how they used to do  
When I run around with the Big Sandy crew.

## BOATIN' ON SANDY

I live on Big Sandy River,  
From Rockcastle County I came;  
I work on Bill Lyons' push boat,  
Gabe Stafford they call my name.

When folks raised sorghum, dug ginseng,  
On haulin' such loads Bill was bent;  
We loaded our boat with its tonnage,  
And away down Big Sandy we went.

We pushed round the curve at Fishtrap,  
With backs bent over the pole,  
To keep her from grazing the sand bar  
And wrecking our precious tole.

Then down past the point at Louisa  
Where the Tug and Levisa Forks meet;  
And Bill played a jig on his banjo,  
While we rested and took time to eat.

It was dark when we passed the old Grist Mill  
That sets at the Falls of Big Blaine,  
We shore was a tired bunch of sinners,  
But never a man did complain.

So on down the river we're floating,  
We sing as our push boat we steer,  
A-hopin' that some fair young damsel  
That lives on the bank will appear.

No doubt we will hug her and kiss her,  
And then, when our mind is at ease,  
We'll turn our backs on her and jilt her,  
And at Catlettsburg court who we please.

Oh! this is the life of the river,  
The song of a push boatin' man,  
We love who we please and as often,  
We eat and we sleep when we can.

**BIG SANDY**



# 1. *BIG SANDY AGAINST THE WORLD*

IT WAS AT A SOCIAL GATHERING, AND IN LONDON, THAT Big Sandy made its first bid for world recognition, and it did so in the person of a very charming young lady of the last century. It was the custom in those days, I am told, for the ladies to withdraw when time came for the toasts to go round, but this occasion marked the exception, for some reason. The health of the queen was pledged, and after one or two more toasts, came one to the young lady, welcoming her as an attractive and honored guest. The necessity to respond found her in a state of confusion bordering collapse, for she had expected no such request, and she heard her own words before she had the faintest idea of what to say: "Big Sandy against the world!"

Later it embarrassed her somewhat to tell of that occasion, but it amused her, too, and the story was told with great glee in her native district. The feeling among its people that the Big Sandy country was an entity in its own right had never before crystallized, but it was there, and had been there for a long time, awaiting the moment of expression. "Big Sandy against the world" came to imply no meaning of hostility to what was not Big Sandy, but rather a feeling of unity, kinship, common interest among its people, of pride in the beauty and wealth of the land

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and of the qualities of its folk. It is a feeling which I shared before I was old enough to understand it, and one which I have never since had occasion to deny.

The mountain people of Kentucky already have an established place in literature: they have represented themselves, and have been represented, and misrepresented, by others. I could wax indignant on the matter of misrepresentation; indeed, one purpose of this book is to show the mountain people as they are rather than as romantic fiction would sometimes have them: proud, aloof, liberty-loving people, on the one hand; degraded poor-white trash on the other. The truth, of course, lies between, as it always does, and the truth, at present, is changing as rapidly as the colors on a distant wooded hill in September twilight. And that is another purpose of this book, to record the passing of one of the last large districts of handicraft culture in the United States.

Kaintuckee, a corruption of an Indian word, like "Ohio" and "Louisiana" once indicated a vast, undefined stretch of land west of the Appalachians and south of the Ohio River, whither free men of the Atlantic seaboard could escape the tyranny of the king, or later, of the federal government. Tyranny was readily discovered and cordially hated, in those days. There, Daniel Boone found for a while the breathing space he needed, and other men of similar independence of spirit followed him. On the western tableland of the area now included within the state's boundaries an agricultural society prospered, and because of the ease of communication by way of the rivers—the Ohio and Mississippi, the Cumberland and Tennessee—and by way of Boone's Trace through Cumberland Gap, one of the major early roads to the west, developed large



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settlements and maintained regular communication with the East.

The terrain of the Big Sandy district in eastern Kentucky is rugged, traversed in the early days only by the roughest of trails, and Big Sandy River is navigable by steamboats of any size for only about one hundred miles. Although its valleys and coves are fertile enough, its early settlers were hunters and trappers in the main, who moved their habitations frequently, planted small garden plots when they planted at all, and were slow to settle down. By the time they did so the tide of commerce had passed them by, and until very recent times parts of the Big Sandy region remained remote enough from centers of civilization to satisfy Daniel Boone himself.

Part of the Big Sandy region lies in West Virginia, for Big Sandy River and one of its main tributaries, Tug Fork, form most of the boundary between West Virginia and Kentucky. In the southwest corner of Virginia, on the heights of the eastern portion of the Cumberland Mountains, innumerable springs and brooks contribute to the formation of Tug Fork, which establishes itself as a stream worthy of a name not far from the point where Virginia, West Virginia and Kentucky meet, and thence flows northward and northward to the Ohio. To the west of the sources of Tug, a similar confluence of rivulets form a small stream called Russell Fork, which cuts a deep gash in the Cumberlands as it flows out of Virginia into Kentucky. This cut, called the "Breaks of Sandy" is about two miles long and is noted for its scenic beauty, being sometimes called "the Grand Canyon of the Sandy." Rising still further to the west of Russell, Levisa Fork joins it

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within the boundaries of Kentucky, and the two flow northward to join Tug and thereby create the Big Sandy.

There is some disagreement about the application of these names. Strictly speaking, I suppose, "Big Sandy" applies only to the forty-odd-mile stretch of water flowing from Louisa north to the Ohio River at Catlettsburg. The Big Sandy system, on the other hand, includes all the streams I have named as well as a good many more. For the sake of clarity I shall name each part of the system as the residents do. To us each part has a local habitation and a name, and all belong to Big Sandy. Incidentally, the Indians called Big Sandy the Chatterawha, which, being a difficult word for mountain people to pronounce, has been made by them into something that sounds like "Chatteroy."

Shallow-draft river steamboats can navigate these waters for a little more than a hundred miles up Levisa Fork, and about ninety miles up Tug, and even more important in the history of the country are the spring freshets on all the streams, which swell them sufficiently to float logs down to the sawmills in centers of industry. Logging was one of the early industries of the region, and has long been an important one; each spring still sees great rafts of timber being floated down to the main waters.

Push boats offered the first form of commercial navigation on the network of waterways in the early days—barges which were laboriously poled upstream, or guided downstream, going from settlement to settlement, taking such provisions as milled flour, refined sugar, spices, tools, harness, and arms and ammunition to the settlers, and receiving in exchange agricultural products, furs, honey and beeswax, and a great variety of other products. Later, small

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steam packets provided the same service, but in time they were driven from the rivers by the swiftness and reliability, even though at greater cost, of the railroads. Now, except for the rafts of timber, and occasional barges of coal, there is little commercial traffic on the Big Sandy waters.

Looking down upon the Big Sandy country, a bird's-eye view would reveal a great oval basin of jagged hills and mountains, clear, rushing streams and heavy, second-growth forests. It is a fertile territory and a rich one, rich in minerals and timber and above all, in beauty.

From north to south the valley is a hundred and fifty miles long, and from east to west averages about eighty miles wide. In area it equals some of the northern states; including those parts of it which lie in Virginia and West Virginia, the valley comprises over four thousand square miles.

The bottom and cove lands produce heavy crops of grain, tobacco and meadow grasses. On the hillsides, grass, grain, timber and fruit of nearly every kind peculiar to a north-temperate latitude are cultivated. One of the exotic products of the early days was ginseng. A variety of that medicinal root, highly valued in China and in such demand that it was almost exterminated there, was found growing wild in the Big Sandy hills, and fetched such a good price that it was almost exterminated *there*. Now it is cultivated by some of the mountain people, is still in demand, and still brings a good price. While the timber is now all second growth, it grows rapidly and there are valuable species: poplar, oak, cherry, walnut, sugar, beech, hickory, linden, sycamore. "Trees of heaven" (*Ailanthus glandulosa*) forty or fifty feet tall, with their flower of a greenish cast similar

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to the blossom of the poplar tree, grow on the mountainsides.

Until comparatively recent times, most of the people of this region lived and died within a few miles of their birthplace, seldom traveled farther afield than the county seat, traded but little in world markets, grew and preserved what food they needed, and made their own clothing, and houses, and furniture. They were shy of strangers, although ready enough to extend a warm welcome to a visiting medicine show, itinerant preacher, or even a commercial salesman, once he had reassured them as to his good intentions.

The mountain people of Kentucky have often suffered hardships unnecessary in the times in which they lived; in matters of education and health they have been far behind the times, and in religion they have sometimes been superstitious. They often took the law into their own hands, adding injury to injury and causing suffering to the innocent. But in the main they suffered for their own shortcomings. While it is possible for the selfishness of a man in Wall Street to bring unhappiness to persons unknown to him and remote from him in other parts of the nation, the wrongdoing of a mountain man was quickly succeeded by its own retribution and remorse.

Big Sandy people still have positive contributions to offer to society; chief among them, their poetic speech and their indigenous balladry. Dependent upon themselves for amusement, they have for several centuries kept alive the chanteys of their ancestors, the romantic border ballads brought from Scotland, and folk songs from England and Ireland. They have learned to compose their own songs in the traditional manner, and even to make their own musical instruments: "banjers," fiddles and pipes. They

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have kept alive and in good social standing that old American instrument, the mouth harp.

They have kept alive, too, a tradition of manhood, of courtesy, of respect for others, that is inevitably lost in urban civilization. Although the stranger is looked upon with suspicion, he is given shelter and food when he needs it; he is accepted as a friend when he has proved his worth. They have kept alive the power of feeling strongly in matters of faith, of tradition, and of justice; a power which, though often mistaken, still remains one of the glories of mankind.

It happened long ago but it is still illustrative of Big Sandy folk, the story of Horatio Catlett who, with his father, Sawny, and his sisters, now incognito, gave the name to Catlettsburg, near the mouth of Big Sandy. The Catletts kept an inn, famous for its cuisine, which often sheltered such notables as General Jackson, and Henry Clay, on their trips to and from Washington. Horatio Catlett at length got into financial difficulties, his property was mortgaged, and was about to be taken away from him. As a last resort, resting a heavy hand upon his cane, he trudged excitedly into the inn, to discuss terms with the new manager, and the two engaged in a heated argument. So passionate was Horatio, and so overwhelmed, that he died on the spot. "So suddenly," a historian declares, "that an autopsy was deemed necessary." But there was no foul play connected with Horatio's demise. It was his own high blood pressure, generated by his own passion, that did him off.

## 2.

## HOME LIFE ON BIG SANDY

**E**VEN TODAY IT IS STILL POSSIBLE TO FIND IN THE BIG Sandy country, along Turkey Fork, John's Creek, George's Creek, Jennie's Creek, Beaver, and Tadpole, families who still live in the same place in the same way as their Anglo-Saxon forbears who climbed deep into the wilderness of the Appalachians a century or two before.

For instance, there is Aunt Linthie Thacker and her folk. To this day they cook at the open fireplace and cut pumpkin in rings to dry on a stick suspended from the "foir board" [the mantel shelf]. There also is the "dip," the same primitive lamp which their forbears used, an earthen cup filled with fat in which a coil of tow covered with tallow is placed, the lighted end hanging over the edge of the cup. To be sure, Aunt Linthie keeps a tallow candle in the same brass candle stick her mother used before her. "And in case a body needs a heap o' light," she will tell you, "there's the oil lamp and the shiny tin pan behind it to give a mighty glow."

Mountain women, especially those living in the Big Sandy country, are apt with their hands and turn the simplest thing on the place to use. You'll see a picture frame made of corn shucks hanging close by the mantel shelf; a rug on the floor made from strips of wool and cotton left

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from "wearin' clothes," the strips being plaited or braided, then sewn round and round or in an oval shape to make a rug. A homemade flintlock gun hangs above the fireplace, and a turkey wing is on the mantel shelf, with which the tidy housewife brushes the ashes and soot from the hearth. A corn husk filled with homemade sausage is kept conveniently near the fireplace for cooking. The churn is made of cedar, with brass hoops. A flax wheel has been in the family for generations. A gourd filled with sugar for cooking is close at hand; always a gourd vine is to be seen growing near the kitchen door of the mountain home, for the gourd serves many purposes: drinking cup, at the wash tub for bailing out water, and, if large enough, it is a handy vessel in which to carry salt to the barn for the cattle.

In early days, tasks were made pleasant at the fireside by all joining in. Flax pulling, which otherwise would have been a mean task, became the occasion for a lively gathering, as did the irksome job of picking burrs from wool. All gathered about the glowing log fire and told tales, exchanged riddles, sang ballads, while each helped with the work. In those days men wore buckskin breeches and hunting shirts of the same material; homemade linen or cotton shirts, which wives and daughters made during many busy hours at wheel and loom. They even made their own shoes of buffalo hide. Their hats were of fur; at this craft the women were often very apt. Today the mountain man wears, preferably, a wide-brimmed black felt, even in summer, though sometimes the younger fellows, following the ways of their forbears who wore plaited hickory hats in the field, compromise with a wide-brimmed straw as they plow or hoe in the scorching sun.

The grandmothers of the present generation wove linsey-

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woolsey for frocks and shirts, made their own dyes of bark and herbs, spun flax into cloth for bed linens and table cloths and petticoats, nightgowns and Sunday shirts. They were proud of their deerskin shoes and slippers. Today they have "store" shoes and boots and slippers. The boys, true to tradition, prefer heavy, high-topped boots to a trim-fitting polished shoe. And they prefer to congregate at a blacksmith shop or the general store, where they are at home in their heavy, rough clothes, and their simple amusements, and can sit with their elders, chew tobacco, and whittle, to an occasion that calls for a clean white shirt.

So proud of a "man-child" is the mountain father, he can scarcely wait until the offspring is big enough to wear sure-enough breeches and galluses. I remember once seeing a child scarcely two, for whom the mother had cut down a pair of the father's breeches, and she had made the little fellow a pair of knitted galluses, too. Usually mountain boys have long pants before they are eight. They are never better pleased than when wearing overalls with galluses and many pockets. Their shirts are of dark-blue material of a heavy grade of denim or cheviot. Before they are old enough to go "courtin'" they prefer these dark, heavy clothes. For winter, mufflers, pulse-warmers—a kind of knitted wristlet—and ear muffs have never ceased to be popular among the men folk.

The girls wear calico, dark-blue and red and pink, with a gingham or a lawn dress for Sunday. Many of them still wear sunbonnets instead of straw hats. Their mothers and grandmothers wear calico in summer, of dark blue, black, or gray, and black sateen bonnets. Dark wool dresses in winter, and hoods and fascinators, and yarn stockings and



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socks, often knitted by the older women, are customary.

When you enter the windowless cabin in the Big Sandy country it is the men folk who will first greet you. "Drag up a cheer and sot a spell." Chewing his homemade twist contentedly, he will tell you, "A pipe ties a body down. Hit's all right for the wimmin folks to smoke a pipe, p'tkler old granny wimmin who don't mind, for about all they're fit for is to tend the baby. But for us men folks it's a heap more comfortabler for us to take a chaw of t'backer. We can step around where we're a-mind to, not wearyin' about a hot coal from the fairplace to keep a pipe a-goin'."

Usually the man will tell you proudly, "I heir-ed this scope of land, this log house, from pa, same as him from his'n." There are not many tenant farmers in the mountains, or even those who make a crop on shares. Love of independence makes the mountain man want to own his own place, however small the acreage may be. He toils unceasingly until it is well cleared, and father and son work side by side in planting and harvesting the crop. Often I have seen even the women folk, mother and daughter, when the housework is finished, pick up a hoe and go into the corn patch, hoeing row for row with their men.

"What was good enough for pa and ma is good enough for me," a man will tell you, and his wife will nod silent assent. "My foreparents lived in this log house and made on—we can do the same." Which may account for the fact that many a log house stands to this day. Many families have added a plank lean-to kitchen to the old house, or even a couple of plank, up-and-down-board rooms. But the old log house stands unchanged on many a creek, in many a quiet hollow.

"A log house," older folk will argue, "is cool in summer

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and warm in winter. We've got wood aplenty to keep the foir goin' in the main house and there's room around the foirplace for the whole family." Sometimes they nail weatherboards over the log to "prettify" it, or restore a tumbled-down "cat-and-clay" chimney of mud and sticks and stones with brick. Now and then there are even brick houses on remote creeks. They look strangely out of place.

"We raise our bread," the man will say, gazing proudly over his acres from the open door, "and the woman [his wife] ever does enough cannin' to last from one summer to the next."

And to prove his words he leads the way, the wife following, to the cellar house. Usually it is built of logs and stones against the hillside, and shelves are heavy with earthen jars, glass jars and even cans of homemade preserves, apple butter, jelly, cucumber pickles, beets, string beans.

"We have our own meat," he opens the door of the smokehouse. "We keep it salted down year after year in the meat log"—he points to a great hollowed log against the wall containing sides of pork—"our sausage meat we case ourselves"—from the rafters of the smokehouse hang rings of sausage, blood pudding, and liver pudding, encased in hog bladders. "What more could a man want?" the thrifty husbandman wants to know. "Here a man can raise a good crop: corn, tobacco, more 'taters than one family can eat in the round of a year, bee stands that give him all the sweetnin' he wants; a patch of sorghum [sugar cane], bushels of beans and tomaters, and cucumbers that set off the table in summer and make good eatin' for pickles of a winter time. And beets, too; why, last year my

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woman canned a hundred jars of beet pickles right yonder off that little piece of ground." He pauses to indicate a small mound beyond the cellar house. "See that! We buried enough turnips to do us till next plantin' time, to say nothin' of feedin' a whole passel of them lazy, good-for-nothin' Keetons that squatted on our place.

"They said they'd work on shares if we'd let 'em stay. We fixed up the old house so's it wouldn't leak, give 'em grub. But I reckon, all told, the whole passel didn't putt in one good week's work. Some folks is down right do-less. Never own an acre of land, nor a nag, nor a cow-brute, nor a plow. Just nat'erly triflin' and ornery. Just want to rove from place to place, livin' off t'other man's labors. But they're mostly not bornt of the Big Sandy country. They're mostly what you might say furriners and hill billies." My host spat contemptuously on the ground. "Tried to get above their raisin', and turned out no good. Hill billies, that's what they are, comin' back into our country from the lowlands."

He reflected a moment. "Sometimes, though, there are folks who try and just can't get ahead, though they've lived all their endurin' lives here in these mountains. Sometimes it might be because they're sickly, punyin' around, can't save enough to buy a place for themselves. It happens that way sometimes," he admitted thoughtfully, "but mostly you'll find folks in the Big Sandy country livin' on heir-ed [inherited] land, where their foreparents fit the Indians."

Because their Anglo-Saxon forbears lived so long apart from the outside world, contented, self-sustaining mountain folk themselves have come to love the isolation of quiet hollows. They genuinely love the traditions of their

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ancestors. Except for such love how else could the song and lore and customs of the pioneers who braved the perils of the wilderness have lived from generation to generation right down to the present in mountain fastnesses that have barred the world? It is not merely because they are separated from the main currents of society; it is certainly not "because they are backward," that they live as they do. Theirs is a way of life, to be preferred, perhaps, to the confusion, the haste, and insecurity of urban districts.

For these reasons it is not uncommon to find in the Big Sandy country today a mountain man like Ebenezer, a woman like his daughter Lucretia, living in the self-same place in the self-same way, following the same pursuits of plow and spinning wheel and loom, as their forbears, and like their kin before them, thrifty, uncomplaining. I came upon them one summer day on one of my many journeys in the mountains of Kentucky. I had set out in quest of a weaver. I found her—and more too.

"This is as fur as the road goes." The driver halted the team and let fly a stream of tobacco juice from the corner of his mouth. Without ado I climbed out over the muddy wheels, portable typewriter in one hand, brief case and camera in the other. I stood a moment while the driver pointed with his whipstock. "Now, Woman, you foller the branch off yon course and ginst you come to the first left-hand fork of the creek, that's Turkey Fork. Ricollect! Turkey Fork, hit jines the Big Sandy way off yonder nigh the county seat. Now," he spat again, "when you come to where you can't go no further on foot, that's whar Lucretia and her pa, Ebenezer, is a-livin'. Ebenezer's woman, Fair Ellen, is dead and gone this long time. And a good wife she was to him to her dyin' day. She were tuck with lung-

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consumption. Foller the creek and you can't go wrong!" he admonished, and with that, clapped the reins on the backs of his mules and disappeared into the forest, while I turned to "foller the branch off yon course."

There was not even a footpath along the winding branch, but I did pass, after a long time, a corn patch on the mountainside. I was despairing of ever coming in sight of a house when suddenly I spied the footprint of a woman in the sand. "It's the sign of a woman," I remembered Little Davy's words, he who had been my guide on many mountain journeys, "on account her toes p'int in. Wimmin don't set their foot straight like us men folks. We set our foot same as the redskins done in their day when they roved this country. We've got a rock with the sign of a Indian's foot set clair and plain in it."

From there on I followed the trail marked by the woman's foot, and finally reached the log house almost hidden in a wooded hollow. A rough-hewn house of logs it was, with a great stone chimney, just as it had been built a century or more ago.

Lucretia and her father were at the door almost instantly after my first "Hallo!" and they greeted me cordially. The girl waited for her father's "Howdy!" and then said, in a musical voice, "We're proud to see you." Ebenezer stepped forth graciously and relieved me of my luggage. "Come in, you're welcome to what we've got. Lucretia will have a hot snack afore you in the twinkle of an eye. I allow you're hongry, awalkin' so far. Mought be you're thirsty, too." He escorted me toward the well in the front yard. The well is usually located in front of the mountain home. Apparently mountain men are more thoughtful or considerate of the passing stranger than of

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their women folk who do the cooking and housework. Rarely is the well to be found near the kitchen door convenient for their use.

"This is lasty water," declared the white-haired Ebenezer, extending me the dripping gourd. "Hit comes from a spring that never in my knowin' has been dry."

When I had drunk deep of the clear, sparkling water, Lucretia, who had disappeared into the house, came hurrying forth. "Mought be you want to tidy up a bit," she said in her quiet voice, extending as she spoke a snowy white towel with crocheted edge. "Come along," she invited, "here's the wash block."

A high block of stone it was, rough hewn on top so as to form a basin. Lucretia pulled out a corn cob at the side, draining out the water that had been left there, and refilled the basin with fresh water from the well. She brought a cake of homemade soap that lay drying on a bench near the fence, a post of which supported an ancient, rusty, farm bell.

In the twinkle of an eye, so it seemed to me, Lucretia and her father again stood side by side in the doorway inviting me in to "eat a snack." There was "ham-meat" and "shucky" beans [beans dried in the pod and partly hulled], sorghum [cane molasses] and "gritted" bread, beet pickles, blackberry pie, and preserves of quince and plum in abundance upon the table. There was buttermilk and sweet milk, cold from the spring house, a homemade cellar, under the stone floor of which a cooling mountain stream always flowed. I was glad there was no coffee, for usually the mountain woman boils her coffee too long in the big granite pot and, lacking a strainer, the grounds add their unpleasantness to the bitter cup.

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That day it pleased old Ebenezer to have me sit close by on a straight hickory chair which he had made, while he gritted corn for the noonday meal. "I fashioned this gritter," he told me matter-of-factly, "and this wood bowl too, that you seen Lucretia mixin' hit in, and this rifle stock besides."

When dinner was over nothing would do but that I "take the likeness of his handiwork." He hurried indoors to bring out another treasure. "Here's a carpet bag that belonged to pa," he informed me. "He swapped it off some scalawag who was goin' through the country long ago on foot, after Morgan's raid."

Later that afternoon, to my delight, Lucretia sat at the spinning wheel and permitted me to "take her likeness," with exhibits of her handiwork: a linen towel, like the one she had brought out for my use, for which she had grown the flax, spun it herself, and then woven the lines on her own loom. The lace for its trimming she had crocheted. But her greatest pride was a bolt of linsey-woolsey [dress material] which she had woven on the loom.

"Pa made the loom when first he brought Fair Ellen his bride—that were ma—into this lonesome hollow. For a time," Lucretia explained, "pa's parents they lived under the clift yonder," pointing to a great overhanging rock that jutted from the mountainside, "until this house were finished and under roof." Her eyes swept the weather-beaten house of logs that had withstood the storm and winds of a century. "We'll all live and die here, I reckon, same as Fair Ellen and the rest of our people." Lucretia sat silently a moment, and presently her thoughts turned back to her own handiwork. "Ma, Fair Ellen, pa ever

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loved to call her, she learnt me to make dyes," said Lucretia with quiet modesty, "of walnut bark, sassafras and roots and madder. We've made all sorts of dyes yonder in the bilin' kittle."

She pointed to a great iron kettle in the kitchen yard that hung on an iron bar supported by two wood forks. "There's scarlet red," she began to enumerate, "that we make from madder, and brown from the hulls of black walnut, and a brownish like or yaller that we make from hickory bark. Of course we fotch in alum and indigo for to make all sorts of colors of blue."

The father interrupted to conduct me to his blacksmith shop close by where he made and mended his crude farm implements; a bull-tongue plow, wagons, sledge hammers, shovel, spade. He showed me, too, the smokehouse wherein "piggins"—small wooden tubs or barrels he had made—were filled with sausage and lard. "We allus keep a stand of honey, too," pointing to a darkened corner of the shed where stood what appeared to be a wooden churn of some ten or twelve gallons' capacity. "Hit's made from mulberry staves," he explained, "and the hoops—they're hickory." He lifted a wooden lid and urged me to taste with a wooden ladle "the finest sweetnin'—pure wild honey—that a body ever putt to their lips." Home-cured hams hung from the rafters. A half-dozen corn husks were suspended from a stick placed crosswise of a corner beam. "Them husks is full of sausage meat," he explained, "spiced p'tkler, for a p'tkler occasion!" His eyes twinkled. "A weddin' maybe—when Lucretia is jined in wedlock to some worthy feller that's fitten for to claim her for his bride." While his daughter stood in silence by his side, Ebenezer confided to me, "Lucretia and Widder Blanton's John are talkin'.





Ebenezer with the carpet bag



Dumb bull, mace, homemade shoe, chair, broom

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Have been since last corn plantin'. John's got breskit," he declared with conviction, "he can outwork any man on the creek. Never tires. Why, he planted thrice over as much as I did that day—"

"You're older in years, pa, than Widder Blanton's John," Lucretia interposed softly, "and besides you were puny and ailin' last corn-plantin' time," she defended her sire. "That's how come you to give consent for me to send word to John to come lend a helpin' hand."

Whereupon the father took up the thread of his thoughts. "Nohow, Lucretia can wed when she's a-mind to. I can make on." He turned to show me a short log, with a handle made of a strip of cowhide, that lay on the floor. "Now hure's a dumb bull!" Ebenezer chuckled as he picked it up. A hollowed log it was, no more than twenty inches in length. "We usen to pack it to a bellin' or a shiverree. This, for a fact, is a racket-raisin' contrapshun. Sounds p'int-blank like a steer a-bellerin'." And to prove it, he pulled the rosined string that ran through the coon hide stretched tight over the end of the log and which served as a sounding head. It gave forth a terrific, a deafening, bellowing sound.

The father and daughter fairly vied with one another to show their handiwork, once they observed my interest. Lucretia brought out a basket she had woven. It was of strips of cane, made into mats. These she had cut to shape, bound them with "factory" [calico], joined the edges with needle and thread, and then lined the basket with "bleach" [muslin]. Then she sat at the spinning wheel for me, and the loom, too, and wove while I watched a "span" of linsey-woolsey, the warp being of linen, the woof of wool.

Are mountain folk content with their lot? Why do they

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cling to the old ways? I thought perhaps Lucretia and Ebenezer might provide a clue to the answer. To be sure, Lucretia could, if she were so minded, forsake the loom and spinning wheel and journey but a short way to the general store at the county seat; or she could go farther away to one of the river towns and buy at a modern store, or at the five and ten, materials the like of which she weaves laboriously from a crop of flax which she and her aged father raise by their own toil. It was in my mind to ask why she chose the harder way.

Lucretia answered gravely. "It costes more to trade in town, to have boughten things. No need to pay sil'er for what you can take from the yearth. We overly grow a good crop of flax here on Turkey Fork. We have from the first, when pa's grandsir cleared the ground, with his woman trudgin' 'longside him, her packin' the old flint-lock gun"—she shot a quick glance at the relic in the wall hooks—"keepin' watch lest the Indians jump from behind a tree and sculp the two of 'em. Then, there was no other way to get woven cloth unless you grew it yourself. And nohow," there was another reason, "boughten garments are not as lasty as homemade things." For a moment Lucretia looked inward upon her thoughts. "A body's happier not to forsake the ways of their elders," she vouchsafed. "Now there's Lark Hewitt and his woman Ellen. Oncet they forsaken Lonesome Creek off yon coast," she raised a slender hand to indicate the direction, "to live in town. Brack Keeton were the cause of it. He tried a heap o' times to tote pa and me and others off with'm. We'd not give ear to his talk. Eh, law," she sighed deeply, "Lark and Ellen seen a moughty sorry life down there. Even had to pay cash money for water to drink and to cook

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with!" Her eyes widened with incredulity. "The water comes out of the wall. No well, no spring, no clear, gurglin' creek for to look upon. Fancy a body havin' to pay sil'er for water to do a body's washin'. Fancy that! And we here on Turkey Fork and Lonesome Creek have water in abundance—free as salvation!" Lucretia reflected a moment. "The youngins down yonder to Boydville in the level land where Lark Hewitt lived ain't no woods to frolic in, no posies to pluck nor to twine into wreaths. Lark, he worked at public works," there was contempt in Lucretia's voice. "Lark forsaken his native land—the farm he'd heir-ed from his grandsir. A body's no call to forsake the ways of their elders," she repeated. "Now look yander," pointing to a robin with a twig in its mouth flying toward a tall beech in the foreyard. "Robins always build their nestes just like they did from the beginnin' of time. Why should human creatures change their ways? It's contrarious to the nat're of us mountain people to forsake the old for the new." She contemplated the bird building its nest.

"That robin, or its growed-off fledgling, build there year arter year—a sure place for a home nest. Life would be hard away from our home nest—away in strange countries down in the level land. I'd never want to forsake this place—never in all my endurin' life." She took from her apron pocket her crochet needle and thread and her fingers began to move swiftly, fashioning a pattern of lace. "Out in the level land where the mills and public works are, folks don't have time for such as this. They're everly on the go to spend what they yearn, Lark and Ellen tell us. Folks don't sit around the foirside of a winter time and make talk and sing song ballets. Lark's Ellen says they don't even have time for books—youngins don't learn their

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letters nor have spellin' matches like we usen to when I were a child."

Then Ebenezer spoke up. "Lucretia here, on account of Fair Ellen bein' took with lung-consumption in her young day, had to take care of her ma—couldn't go to school every term. But she were apt at books. She learned right off, by herself. Delights in books, Lucretia does."

A little shelf of well-worn volumes above the mantel bore witness to her delights: there was a Bible, a McGuffey Reader, a speller, a history, a geography, and a much thumbed volume of Robert Burns' poems.

The old man himself had been a schoolmaster in his youth. He had taught his daughter there by the fireside, through the long winter evenings, he told me, by the light of the glowing logs, and of pine "tarches" thrust in a hole in the stone hearth—there was the rounded hole—whose pitch made a smoky, flickering blaze to brighten the printed page.

So pleasantly did the time pass with Lucretia and Ebenezer, it was sundown before I realized it, so I stayed till morning there on Turkey Fork. Women folk do not walk a mountain road by night. To that ancient custom I cling faithfully with my people of the Kentucky hills.

By sunup I was on my way again. Lucretia and her father stood in the doorway according to mountain custom to bid me farewell and to urge me to come again.

"Don't pass Lark Hewitt's folk by," old Ebenezer said. "I'm sure it would pleasure Lark and Ellen no little to have you tarry with them for a time."

"They're back on Lonesome," Lucretia reminded me, "back in the home nest they are, as satisfied and peaceable as you'd like."

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So I did tarry for a time with Lark Hewitt and Ellen, and heard more of their story; their sorry adventure in the level land, their final contentment on Lonesome Creek.

Ellen was ever content with old ways, and Lark had not complained until that time he had gone, at Brack Keeton's urging, down to the Singin' Gatherin', "nigh the level land," down in the foothills of the Cumberlands near Boydville. Then folks had cheered until the hills gave back the echo, and applauded tall, stalwart Lark Hewitt, tilted back in a straight hickory chair, as he sang the wistful tale of "Barbary Ellen." The throng that packed the hillsides—they'd come from all over the nation to hear the music of the mountains from the lips of mountain singers—lingered in the memory of Lark Hewitt.

Afterward, Brack Keeton had egged him on every time they met. "Lark, you'd ort to come to town—down to Boydville. Singin' and makin' music like you do, no tellin', you might even turn out to be a radio artist! And what's more, there's a mill down yonder. Met a feller told me he earned as much as twenty dollars in one day at the steel mill there!" Twenty dollars in one day! That was more money than Lark had seen after a whole summer's work, hoeing, plowing, grubbing in boiling sun and pelting rain.

He tossed a piece of broken harness to the floor and slumped into a chair, watching as Ellen plied a heavy iron to and fro along the wearin' clothes she had been battlin' before sunup at the battlin' block beside Lonesome Creek. Tomorrow would be the first Sunday in the month of May, the occasion when they carried posies to the buryin' ground. She meant that they should be fit and proper in clean garments.

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"Iffen you'd not be contrarious, Ellen, we could be right now havin' it a heap easier, down in the level land. Why, only t'other day Brack Keeton was a-sayin' how nice his woman's got it now, down to Boydville. You could have it nice too, Ellen. Brack's woman has got the purtiest, shiny iron you ever laid eyes on. 'Lectric!" Lark watched Ellen from the tail of his eye. "Just putt a contrapshun on the end of a woir in the iron and hook that up to 'nuther contrapshun on the wall and stand thar. Right in the same place and iron—all day if you're a-mind to."

Ellen ironed as he talked. Presently she paused, rested the iron on its end in the battered pie pan on the ironing board. She was looking not at Lark, but beyond him toward the split-rail fence that Lark's grandsire had made with his own hands, long before either of them had been born. She glanced through the other door at the big log room, the main house, where all the Hewitts had been born, married, and died, for generations. That room of logs Lark's old grandsire had fashioned with his own hands. "I'm wantin' we shall all look fitten and proper tomorrow when we go to the buryin' ground," Ellen told her husband. "I'm wantin' to putt a posie or two on ma's grave, her dead and gone twenty years, ain't it?"

Lark had gotten up out of his chair, shoved it back against the wall, and reached wearily for the broken harness where he had tossed it on the floor. "I don't rightly ricollict," he drawled indifferently. "I ain't studyin' on them that's dead and gone. I ain't studyin' on old-fogey ways no more, Ellen. Ginst I plow and hoe and grub from sunup to nightfall, what have I got, nohow? Ginst I git one piece o' harness mended, somethin' else busts. That's how it goes everly from day to day, year in and



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year out. Can't git nothin' ahead. If 'twarn't for grandsir leavin' this place to pa, and me heirin' hit from pa same as him from his'n, we'd not even have a roof over our heads. What's a body to do?—can't lay hands on hardly nary dollar o' cash money."

"We've got a scope of land," Ellen reminded. "We got vittals a-plenty, what with cannin' we ever have a-plenty through the winter; we got meat a-plenty to do us, stored in the meat log yonder in the smokehouse. . . ."

"What we got laid by," Lark countered, "in cash money? A body's got to have cash money saved up—so's iffen they want to sit back and rest a spell they can pay their county tax and—"

"We've always paid the tax," Ellen answered, "ain't we, Lark?" Eyes widened with apprehension.

"Yes, so far," he answered reluctantly. "But a body's got to lay by somethin'—have cash money in the bank like Brack Keeton and his woman has—Brack's workin' at the mill!"

"What doin'? Who larnt him to work at public works?"

"Brack's somethin' like a deppity sher'f. The mill kinda has to be watched. Fellers might come around and pilfer—have to kinda keep guard and watch on the mill. Brack wears a badge and iffen he's a-mind to he can get a man warranted for breakin' the law."

Ellen's eyes met Lark's. "I ain't a-wantin' no man of mine," she said resolutely, "for to be a sher'f or no deppity sher'f—a-keepin' guard and watch on nobody or nothin'!" She remembered back to the time when the deputy sheriff, Kirk Foley, had taken off old Uncle Johnny Stidum for "makin'," way up at the head of the holler. Kirk Foley had worn a badge, he belonged to that loathsome cate-

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gory known to the mountain people as "hill billies." A hill billy is one who makes mock of his own people, holds them up for ridicule to folk out in the level land.

Lark understood her. "I'd not be a deppity or nothin' like that, Ellen; I'll be maybe operatin' a 'lectric crane, or iffen that don't suit my fancy, I'll take my guitar and go to that place"—to save his life he couldn't think of the words: radio station—"I'll go to them fellers and they'll say: 'Name your own price, Lark, we need a feller like you here. You'll be makin' hundreds of dollars with your tunes and ditties, first thing you know.'"

Ellen stood silent, her eyes on the morning glories tumbling and climbing over the stoop outside kitchen-house door; rising to the far-off ridge with its pink rhododendron in "full blowth." "I'll go, Lark, wherever you see fitten for to take me, any time arter tomorrow. That bein' the first Sunday in May, I'm wantin' to putt a posie on the graves. It ain't that I'm wantin' to contrary you. . . ."

"You shall have your way, Ellen," Lark was at once contrite. "'Tain't that I'm wantin' to be contrarious, nuther, nor to forsake Lonesome. Don't you appreciate, Ellen, hit's for you and the baby?"

"No man's land" in Boydvile was a row of dilapidated shacks. One of the town's richest men had bought the hovels, getting them at his own price for moving them to make way for a factory. In the fourth one from the end of the row, Lark and Ellen and Little Lark found a home in the level land. You stepped out the front door right on to the concrete road. From the kitchen door Ellen looked upon a concrete wall constructed to keep the hillside from sliding down and carrying the shacks with it. Exactly alike

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were all the shacks, with not even a vestage of paint or whitewash to distinguish one from the other. She hung the washing over a sagging rail on the narrow platform beside the kitchen door.

How frightened she had been that first day when she heard a loud knock at the door. Lark was out looking for work. The knock was repeated. It could not be a friend; out on Lonesome you didn't knock—you called a cheery "hallo!" as you drew near the house. Only an enemy would knock—and then shoot. They had done that to Bijé Ellington. A stranger had come from the level land to "warrant" Bijé for "makin'." Bijé's dead body had toppled over right in the doorway before the eyes of Molly.

Ellen cowered in a corner, hugging her baby, silent, trembling. The door-to-door salesman went off down the street, laughing.

As time went on she got "naturalized" to folks knocking on the door, as Lark told her she would. She came to know about agents and peddlers, the "stallmint" man, the collector, insurance agents. One of them sold her a broom that you rolled along the floor and it took up every scrap. So fascinated was she to see the contrivance glide over the floor on little unseen wheels, swallowing dust and litter, that she paid the first quarter. They kept the sweeper just two weeks. When the collector came next time, Ellen didn't have the necessary quarter, and he took the sweeper away.

As time went on, she began to wish she hadn't left behind all the things Lark had urged her to leave, the old-fogey things. Now, before you cooked on the gas stove, Lark learned that it was necessary for him to take ten dollars in cash money to the gas office. "Where's the

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spring, or the well?" Ellen had asked that first day. "I'm thirstin'!" And Lark had laughed proudly. "Hesh! Ellen, there's no spring. Look hure." And there, bless you, he turned a little iron wheel on top of a pipe and water spurted; spurted right out of the wall!

But before the water spurted Lark had had to go down to the water office and give the man there three dollars in cash money.

"You can't take along the oil lamps nor Granny's old-fogey candlestick," Lark had said. "Look," he invited Ellen's gaze, "just turn this little black button," he reached overhead to the swinging electric bulb, "and there you got light!" But before Lark turned on the light he had to pay in advance cash money to the 'lectric man.

"There's a lot of thievin' goin' on around Boydville," Brack Keeton had warned Lark, and Lark in turned warned Ellen. "Don't forget to lock your door." A lock on the door! Such a thing was unheard of in Ellen's life, unheard of on Lonesome Creek. Ellen had never seen a door key. She put it on a long string around her neck to make sure to have it handy if she ever left the house.

A miserable, fly-specked, single bulb dangled from the ceiling in each of the three dirty rooms of the shack in no man's land—rooms that reeked of the smell of fried foods. The floors were filthy, and the walls were covered with layers of torn and faded wall paper. The rubberoid roofing on the box house had many patches, but not enough. The first rainy day brought puddles of water here and there. Ellen had to move the bed to the middle of the floor; had to put the dishpan on the bed to catch the water. A rubberoid roof. Ellen and Lark had been accustomed only to a rived-oak shingle roof on their house of logs, with shingles

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made by Lark's grandsire's own hand, that still kept out the rain and snow.

From Jake's secondhand place Lark bought a few pieces of furniture. Not brand new, of course. Why buy brand new things? "All you gotta do," Jake explained, "is buy you a coupla cans of paint at the five and ten."

The five and ten! Already Lark and Ellen were learning of that wonderland. A world of beautiful and useful goods spread invitingly, amazingly, before their perplexed eyes. She'd take this, she'd take that. Bless you, that first day Ellen made her way wearily, but excitedly, back to their house with her paper poke filled to overflowing with all sorts of useless gadgets. She'd spent the money she meant to hold back for the collector, for the payments to Jake on their furniture; the money for the gas man, the 'lectric man, the water man and for the house rent.

"I'm wantin' you to get yourself a pretty," Lark had said proudly, "I'll be makin' big money, first thing you know."

Then had come that first encounter at the radio station. Always Ellen would remember that first day after they had gotten their pieces of furniture into place and Lark had paid the 'stallmints on everything and Jake marked it on the card and she had pinned the card up on the wall for safe keeping and convenience when the collector came around. Then Lark had set out with his guitar. Brack Keeton had told him that they were looking for a fellow like him at the radio station, and told him how to find the place. Lark had washed his face till it shone, soaked his hair with soapy water till there was not a wave to be seen, and set his hat down tight on his head. But as he waited in the station offices his heart beat wildly. A sickening fear

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came upon him. "You've made your brags to your woman, to a heap o' folks out on Lonesome. You're a-bound to go in there and try your hand," he urged himself on.

A dapper fellow appeared at a door on which was lettered "We welcome new talent." "Hey you!" he pointed to Lark, "come in."

Inside the audition room, Lark stumbled over a velvet rug.

"Had radio experience?" The questions shot at him. "Been in town long?" Lark shook his head. "What'll it be?" asked the young man. "Let's get goin'. If you got anything, let's have it."

Lark managed to brush a hand over the strings of the guitar, lifted his head and sang "Barbary Ellen" just as he had sung it many a time in the moonlight on the steprock when he was courtin' Ellen Trivis.

"Know anything else?" the radio fellow interrupted. "Say, what about 'Pappy and the Apple Tree?' Let's hear the real hill-billy stuff if you got it. This crap you're singin' won't go!" Lark's fright returned.

"You look the part, out and out," said the radio chap, flicking the ash from his cigarette. "Hill billy from head to foot!" He appraised Lark Hewitt with a cynical eye. "Don't happen to have a jug of corn in your pocket, or a gun on your hip, do you, Hill Billy?"

When the station staff burst into the room they saw the program director pulling himself to his feet by means of a chair, his hair disheveled, a trickle of blood oozing from a cut on the cheek. Lark Hewitt, white with rage, held the neck of his shattered guitar at his side. . . .

There was still the mill. Twenty dollars a day. Hope once more rose in Lark's bosom. Next morning he got up

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before sunup to walk to the mill. After all, maybe he would be better off getting twenty dollars a day for operatin' a 'lectric crane. But Lark Hewitt of Brushy Fork of Lonesome Creek wasn't prepared for the things that faced him.

First of all there was a bewildering questionnaire! He could read and write simple things, but never could he figure out that bewildering list of questions. What do you know about electricity? Ever operate a crane? Ever handle a motor? The head of the Division of Employment popped questions thick and fast at the bewildered applicant.

Brack Keeton was no longer at hand to give advice. With his wife he had moved on to another town down the river; working now at a shoe factory as night watchman, his wife, with the hennaed permanent and gold tooth, engaged in smearing mustard on hot dogs at the Greasy Spoon Lunch Wagon.

Ellen was cooking mush when Lark slumped wearily into a chair beside the kitchen table that evening. Too beaten to offer a word, he sat tapping his fingers slowly on his knee. At length Ellen spoke, though on Lonesome Creek women folk waited until their men folk spoke first.

"Nohow, there's other work besides operatin' a crane. We'll make on."

Then had followed the weary tramp through the streets of Boydville, seeking a job. "Anything—I ain't carin'—I've got breskit," he had blurted desperately. It was Mrs. Brown's brother-in-law, the fellow who got reeling drunk every pay day, who finally got Lark a job as burner in the scrap yard: Freeberg's scrap yard. "You putt on eye-specs," Lark explained to Ellen when he trudged wearily home

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that first evening, "and you taken a tarch in your hand, a tarch that shoots out a big flame, and you hold it agin the iron and burn it smack dab in two. You sit honkered down on a great passel of rusty iron, old broke-up cars and such, and you sot thar and burn hit up into pieces with the blowin' tarch."

The first week Lark's arms were burned in spots all the way to the elbow. His hands were raw sores. Before he knew it there were no soles left on his shoes, from walking around on rough scrap piles, stepping on hot iron. Freeberg's scrap yard was away down near the river bank. You couldn't come home to eat dinner. Had to pack it along in a tin bucket.

Once you got a job burning in the scrap yard, Jake, the secondhand man, and everybody else seemed to know it. Then there began a stream of people knocking at your door. First there was the Metropolicy man! "You gotta keep your old woman and your kid and yourself insured!" "Gotta buy you a lot in the cemetery." Out on Lonesome there was the family buryin' ground; Granny Trivis lay sleeping there and Ellen's parents and Lark's folk. Out on Lonesome Creek neighbor folk gathered together and with loving, tender care fashioned a box of pine, covered it with black "factory" for old folks, or "bleach" of spotless, pure white for a child; lined the pine box with soft cotton or a clean "kiverlid." "You gotta have a undertaker and embalm 'em here in Boydvile."

Another tap at the door. The refrigerator agent. "You oughta have an electric icebox. Miz Brown, your neighbor, has got one. Dollar down and two dollars a month. Cheaper'n buyin' ice. All you gotta do, turn the button



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there, 'n' you got ice, day or night. Never notice it on your electric bill."

"Sure, get you one," Lark said. "I'm wantin' you to have what others has got, like I promised you. You got a right to have what others has got."

The great glistening white cupboard was delivered a few days later, and set up in the kitchen. Ellen and Lark had paid the dollar down, but what with work being scarce, when the fourth payment came due and they had no money, the van backed up to their door and took away the refrigerator.

"We've got to have a radio," Lark argued with Ellen. "Know a feller can get me one cheap. One of his buddies that's workin' on another yard couldn't keep up his payments. Jake took it back. But it's good as new."

He bought the radio, on time. Dollar down, fifty cents a week. Lark would have had it paid for in no time, if nothing had happened.

A strike in the scrap yard!

"Say, you," a slick-tongued fellow sidled up to Lark one morning, "what about signin' the card?" He had looked at Lark with a cold eye. "Sign the card, or else—"

The strike in Freeberg's scrap yard dragged along for weeks.

Lark fell behind with his house rent and with his grocery bill. They had to move into a smaller shack, a worse one, for which they paid more rent. There was no garden patch where you could go dig a few potatoes, cut off cabbages, pull up an apronful of onions, or beans.

Sore of foot and sorer of heart, Lark Hewitt came home one evening. The strike was over, and he'd been working from six that morning to eight o'clock that night. He'd

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had little to eat, drinking coffee out of a tin can, crunching a cold sandwich. Lark by nature was a peace-loving man. None of the Hewitts had ever been "warranted" for trouble of any kind. Disturbances here with the strikers burned deeply into the soul of him. His heart was sore, his feet, his hands. His arms and back ached. He was weary of the whole thing. Even so, he helped Ellen straighten their few pieces of furniture in the small shack, helped set up the stove. Had to draw ahead to pay his gas bill at the other shack they'd left. Had to draw ahead for the water bill, the 'lectric. "They'll shut it off if you don't pay up. Then where will you be?" Had to draw ahead to pay on the grocery bill, so Staley's would let him have a poke of flour, a few potatoes, lard, coffee. "A man's gotta eat, his family's gotta eat!" Brushing a hand across his furrowed brow as if to clear the confusion he said dejectedly, "'Pears like 'tain't like I 'lowed hit would be—"

"There's a heap o' men folks plumb out o' work," Ellen offered consolation. "You got a job, Lark. We'll make on somehow. I've cooked us up a big kittle o' greasy vittals. Turnip greens and taters, some cracklins I got offen the meat man."

The next pay day, though he had worked eight hours a day for six days, burning on Freeberg's scrap yard, Lark came home with scarce four dollars in his pay envelope. "Wells garnisheed me," he had said helplessly. "Took nigh all my draw for house rent. But look—" he drew a parcel from under his jumper. "I aimed to get you that new shiny iron, iffen I didn't fetch home nary copper cent."

He reached overhead, removed the fly-specked light bulb, hooked up the iron.

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Cautiously Ellen gripped the smooth black handle. Not hot at all. You didn't have to have a clumsy holder like with Granny's iron. She moistened a finger, touched it to the gleaming iron. Sizzling hot! To and fro it glided over a white pillow case, leaving never a smudge. She caught a glimpse of her reflection as it slid over a shirt, a frock of Little Lark's, an apron, and all the while she stood there in the same place. "Hit's nigh witchy," she murmured, and there were little glad flecks in Ellen's dark eyes, a look of proud possession, as she'd lift it to gaze at its smooth, shiny surface. "See your likeness, baby child!" She held it at safe distance that Little Lark might view his mirrored self. He cooed and patted his chubby hands in delight.

Lark had paid fifty cents down. Neither he nor Ellen minded how long it would take to pay for it. At last they had the 'lectric iron, like Brack Keeton's woman had, like Lark had bragged Ellen should have.

So pleased was Ellen over her new possession, she snatched up the baby from the chair where Lark had put him while he went to the grocery, and hurried out the kitchen door, down the back way to Mrs. Sexton's, to tell the good news. When she got there one of the Sexton children had cut its finger with the butcher knife. It was not until the roaring red fire engine dashed up the concrete road that she realized she had forgotten the electric iron. The kitchen was completely gutted by flames, leaving the Hewitts only the clothes upon their backs. Sheets, pillow cases, table cloths, quilts, "kiverlids," all that they had brought from Lonesome Creek had gone up in flames.

It was on Saturday of the next week—pay day. Lark had come home carrying on his shoulder the long-promised go-cart. He'd bought it at Jake's. "Good as new!" Jake had

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said. "Your wife can scrub it. Look at the rubber tires, an' the brakes!" Jake demonstrated the security of the brake gripping on the back wheels. "Just put that little handle down, see! There you got it fast, can't push it, see, with the brakes on! Safe!" Jake grinned and rubbed his hands one around the other.

The baby laughed and clapped his hands when Ellen, after scrubbing the go-cart and drying it well, lifted him into the seat, carefully fastening the strap about his middle. "Look, Lark! 'Tis a purtey ve-hikel, now that I've scrubbed hit. Fair blue, mought nigh the color of our baby child's eyes." She wheeled him out along the concrete road, Lark walking proudly beside her, nodding and smiling to this one and that one who peered from the doorways of the shacks in no man's land. Ellen and Lark beamed with pride. At last she gave the handle to Lark and he pushed the cart proudly about. "Mind the vehikels," Ellen warned as lumbering trucks bowled along, "whilst I get supper."

When Little Lark fell asleep, Lark pulled the go-cart to the door, set the brake as Jake had showed him, and left it standing where all who passed by could see. He went into the shack to tell Ellen that their child was sleeping just outside the door. "Plumb satisfied," he was saying, "peaceable as a chick under a hen's wing." And Ellen, moving happily from stove to table, answered with quiet, contented smile, "Lark, I'm plumb pleased our babe's got his pretty at last."

"He's a right to have what others has," Lark answered.

Then they heard a neighbor's child scream. No one knew how it happened, but the brake on the go-cart had been released. Little Lark, asleep in his clean-scrubbed ve-

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hikel, rolled down to the roadway. A great truck piled high with scrap iron coming fast around the curve, bore down upon the sleeping child. . . .

When Lark brought in the mangled little body, Ellen sank into a chair in the kitchen, sat like a figure of stone, hands clenched in aproned lap, speechless, dry-eyed, staring into space. After a long time, when neighbor women had washed the babe and placed the lifeless little body on the bed, for Lark would have no undertaker lay a hand on his child, after they had put on the little white dress that Ellen herself had made—for Lark would have no boughten shroud of satin for his child—he came to Ellen's side. He touched her shoulder, as you would to arouse a sleeper. "Ellen—Ellen—you can't take on this way—the Good Lord knows best."

Ellen stirred. "Our child, our onliest little man," she murmured brokenly.

"Hit's all my fault," Lark stammered. "None of this would ever a-happened, hadn't been for me. But now, we're goin' back to Lonesome. Startin' back at sunup. We're takin' Little Lark back too, back to the buryin' ground where t'other Hewitts and Granny Trivis and your folks lay a-sleepin'. Hit's all my doin's, all this misery I've brought upon my own household."

"Lark!" Ellen's voice was steady, "don't fault yourself, Lark. Hit's still the month of May. The mornin' glories will be bloomin' over the kitchen-house door, the mountain laurel will be in full blowth, and the purtey-by-night on Lonesome. . . ."

At the county seat, whither they traveled by truck, neighbor folk from Lonesome Creek met them with a jolt wagon. In this way they had journeyed down to Boydville.

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Tenderly they lifted the little pine box that Lark had fashioned with his own hands into the bed of the wagon filled with clean hay. Lark climbed wearily to the board seat; Ellen sat beside him. Two neighbor men rode ahead on horseback. It was the way on Lonesome Creek. The moon was high as they drew near their cabin. Neighbor women folk had gathered in, lighted the lamp.

Slowly the little procession moved along the narrow footpath to the buryin' ground atop the ridge, two neighbor men carrying the little pine coffin. They had already dug the little grave. And now they put down their tender burden. Ellen and Lark stood side by side. In the moonlight, her face pale, her eyes tearless, Ellen looked strangely tranquil. In her hand she held a posey, a "purtey-by-night" she had lingered to pluck by the kitchen-house door. And now old Brother Marbry was offering a word of prayer. "Lark"—Ellen's voice was scarce above a whisper—"iffen you don't mind, I'm wantin' my baby for to have this posey in his leetle hand, this purtey-by-night—"

And when Ellen had had her way, they placed Little Lark beside Delinthie, mother of Ellen who had borne all of twelve, and Granny's son, Ephraim Trivis, who had sired the sturdy flock of a full round dozen. Close to the grave of Old Lark, grandsire of Lark, lay the child of Ellen and Lark Hewitt in the buryin' ground atop the ridge on Lonesome Creek.

Alone now Ellen and Lark stood side by side.

"Ellen"—Lark lifted his eyes, no longer troubled, to those of his mate. "Our man-child, he's at rest now, hure alongside the Hewitts and the Trivises, hure on Lonesome. He won't never know none of the misery of us down there to Boydville. What's good enough for me is good

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enough for mine—" Lark's voice was hushed, "—that were ever my grandsir's talk—"

"And Granny Trivis, she ever said the same," Ellen echoed softly. "Lark," it was a voice of hope and tenderness, "you mind how Granny ever spoke of the purtey-by-night bloomin' off yonder by the kitchen-house door? Look, Lark," she pointed to their cabin in the moonlight. "See, yonder's the purtey-by-night. Mind how Granny ever said when she gathered in the dry pods, there's hope and promise?" Ellen rested a hand lightly on his shoulder as he stood, head uncovered, there on the ridge in the moonlight, a gentle breeze stirring his dark hair. "Lark, we'll never forsake Lonesome, never, never, on account of our man-child a-sleepin' hure—and on account, Lark, there's a babe comin' for to take his place."

Then Lark Hewitt lifted high his head in the moonlight, his strong hand sought Ellen's arm, he gripped it tight, as he had Granny Crowwait's arm that time she had told him of their first born, and now at last he found his voice. "Ellen, for a fact, are we goin' to have another babe?" There was joy and peace and hope in his voice. "You are sartin hit's truth you speak, Ellen?" She nodded reassurance, "Then soon as he's big enough for to sot foot on the yearth I'm aimin' to larn him a heap o' things. A lonesome tune like 'Barbary Ellen,' a gay ditty. I aim to larn him a heap about Lonesome Creek—" In his hope and joy, in a moment's time Lark Hewitt had brushed aside the years, leaped eagerly to the future and all that it held. "I'm aimin' for to clear another scope of land and make a big crop, open a seam o' coal. There's plenty under this yearth hure, grandsir named hit to me many's the time. There's all a body wants, hure on Lonesome, for me and mine."

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That had been a year or more ago, and now this summer's day when I tarried with the Hewitts, Lark himself, after Ellen and I had washed and dried the dishes, took me over the place to see all that had been accomplished. There was the well-covered barn, mended fences, there were fat hogs and plump chickens, and Bossy with another calf. "There's a span o' mules money can't buy." He caressed their satin noses as we passed their stalls. "And look off yonder, that big scope of clearin', and see the drift mouth. I opened that seam of coal my own self, and already I've sold a good many ton. Paid cash for my new gee-tar out of the first ton. Ellen wouldn't have it no other way," he smiled boyishly. "We got money laid by, me and Ellen, in the bank down to the county seat. You taken notice how Ellen bragged on her new iron cook stove with the oven on top where she can keep vittals warm till I come in from the field. She claimed t'other'n was good enough. I had to coax her to let me sell it for scrap and fotch on the new iron stove. There's nothin' in this worl' too good for my woman!" Lark said fondly. "See that new chicken house I built for her behind the barn? She set a dozen or more hens right off, nice dry, clean nestes make plenty of good healthy chicks under a good roof." He pointed proudly to his carpentry. "Ellen thinks a sight more of that chicken house and her iron stove than some wimmin do of a new store frock."

Everywhere there was something of which Lark Hewitt was proud. Above all there was Ellen, happy with a "man-child" in her arms.

"We call his name Little Lark for his sire," Ellen had said almost as soon as I set foot in the house, laying a gentle hand on the curly head. "Little Lark arter his sire



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and his grandsir and our first born that the good Lord taken from us."

That, too, I came to know, was an old custom among mountain folk in naming their children.

Always I'd remember the three there by the kitchen-house door in the evening, Lark with his new guitar, and Ellen with Little Lark in her arms, the soft evening breeze blowing his golden curls, the morning glories over the stoop, purple and blue and fair pink in the moonlight, the sweet-scented "purtey-by-night" beside the door, and Lark singing softly as he strummed the strings, singing softly the wistful tale of Barbary Ellen.

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The girl sat silent. Suddenly she straightened as if an unseen hand had struck her in the face. "'Tain't that I mind pap marryin' agin. I can bide the flouts of a step-maw, same as many a one afore me has done. But," she cried with indignation, "hit's the kind of a critter he tuck that riles me!" The dark eyes blazed. "Woman, do you appreciate she's already wheedled pap into sendin' off to git her a set of chiny dishes? Cups and saucers with red roses on 'em! My maw, Alliefair, made on withouten sich fixins. I said as much to pap right out afore his woman. Says he, 'Iffen you don't like the way I'm treatin' your step-maw, you can leave my rooft! My rooft and Sippi's. For what's mine, is her'n.'"

Elvirie twisted her fingers together, tapped a bare foot nervously on the floor. "What's more," her eyes narrowed to a slit, "that critter, her as were Mississippi Tuchin, Luke Tuchin's widder, afore she come by the name of Mullan, she wears a pink calicker bonnet! Starched, as stiff as that board!" Elvirie clapped a quick hand upon the table. "Eh, law, Alliefair Pridemore Mullan never carried on in no sich fashion," the girl added proudly. "Humble, maw were, and right livin'. Putt on her black calicker frock when she become a wedded wife, and her just turned thirteen. Putt it on and kept it on! That were Alliefair."

"Alliefair—what a pretty name," I seized the opportunity to stem the tide of Elvirie's rancor.

"I everly favored it," said the girl softly, all the anger gone from her voice.

"And Pridemore—your mother's maiden name—that's pretty too. Alliefair Pridemore," I put the two together, "how lovely." Elvirie surveyed me quietly. Again her hand clutched the bosom of her faded dress as if to make sure

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of whatever was hidden there. "Do you know," I ventured carefully, "if my name were not what it is, and I could choose a name for myself, I believe I'd choose Pridemore. It seems to mean so much."

Elvirie's head lifted high. "I named hit to maw many's the time when she were livin', that she give up a heap prettier name than she tuck when she married pap."

Fearing to get into deep waters I made haste to comment, "Well, now, the name of Mullan, that's pretty too. And it is a fine name, one that goes back to the Huguenots, early settlers in our country. Elvirie Mullan, why, you couldn't find a lovelier name if you searched through—"

"'Pretty is as pretty does,' maw allus claimed." Allie-fair's daughter smiled dubiously. Silence fell between us, as she studied the floor, then again she lifted her eyes to mine. "I've an idee that there's nothing ever happened but what it could be worse. Paw mought a tuck that ornery Sarie Fraley to be a step-maw over me." A fearful look came into the girlish eyes. "There was a heap o' talk," she confided. "Now you take pore little Luvernie Feltham. Ginst they funeralized her mommy, bless you, Yance Feltham, her pap, had married him a second woman and she had twins! She taken them to the funeral of Ettie, that were Luvernie's mommy, and them collicky youngins squaled and screamed so loud with gripin' pains, you couldn't hear nary word Brother Marbry was sayin' about Ettie Feltham layin' dead out in the church yard. Kept on their squalin', did the twins of Yance by his second woman, till abody couldn't even hear little Luvernie and her pap weepin' and mournin', and t'other youngins of Yance by Ettie, his first woman, carryin' on. But from where I sot in the church house I could see Yance and little Luvernie

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were takin' on somethin' turrible. Ginst Brother Marbry got done praisin' dead Ettie, Yance's eyes were red as a fox, and his second woman, when she could spare her apron from her own eyes, re'ched up and sopped up the tears outten Yance's. Screamin' agin and agin that she aimed to be a good, kind step-maw to Yance's motherless youngins and for to mother Luvernie, oldest of the flock, and the rest of 'em same as if they wuz her own. And that very day, mind you, she flogged the life nigh outten Luvernie. Claimed Luvernie pinched the twins and made 'em cry. Putt her outten the wagon and made her walk home every step of the way from the church house."

For a long, quiet moment Elvirie contemplated her bare feet. Presently she took up the thread of her thoughts. "Things could be worser'n what they are for me. Nohow, pap's woman, her that were Mississippi Tuchin, ain't birthed nary babe yit!" Elvirie's eyes glowed with satisfaction. "And so fur as my eyes tell me, she ain't liable for none—yit!"

"Look yonder across the road," I laughed (too heartily, I fear, for Elvirie gaped at me in perplexity), "the wind has blown the judge's hat clear off his head and out into the road."

Without a vestige of a smile Elvirie, following my glance, observed: "Pore little spare-built Lawyer Tabor a-chasin' the jedge's hat fast as ever his leetle bitsy spin'el legs can pack him." She straightened in her chair. "Them two is liable to be over here tirectly." With that she cautiously drew from the bosom of her dress a folded paper. She placed it in my hand. "Sarch them writin's, quick! What do they call for?" she asked eagerly. "I'm satisfied that you, a-follerin' the law like you do, traipsin' around

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from one court to t'other, you've larnt a heap about documints. I confidence you. Aunt Ailsie out our way named it to me you were a friendly turn, kind to her kin the Vintons that was tried for a killin'. That's how come me to be here." The Vinton case came back to my mind in a flash. A poor unlettered lad tried for murder.

Elvirie's eager voice cut short my own reverie. "I'd a heap druther you read them writin's for me, stead of the jedge, even, or Lawyer Tabor, 'cause that might make talk. And pore old Brother Marbry, no use axin' him. He don't know 'B' from bear's foot. But," she quickly defended, "he's apt at preachin' the Script're, and funeralizin' the dead."

When the paper was spread out on my table she leaned closer and, placing a finger on the red notarial seal, said with assurance, "I'm satisfied it is a documint and not a letter. Thar's the sign of it! Maw told me *whar* it were hid, in an iron cook vessel buried down under the stone floor of the milk house. But she gasped her last afore she could say *what* it were. 'Sarch! Sarch!' says she, over and over, 'under the stones in the milk house.' And I sarched unbeknownst to pap, when he was off sparkin' Sippi Tuchin—and that's what I found!"

It took but a glance to see that it was a deed from Alliefair Pridemore Mullan to her daughter, Elvirie Mullan, "my beloved and only child of my body." A "documint" indeed, the rights and covenants of which dated back to a land grant from His Majesty Charles II. A "documint" by which "for love and affection" Alliefair deeded outright all her land and appurtenances thereunto belonging [inherited from the Pridemores] to the "said Elvirie Mullan," with the provision that "so long as my beloved husband, Heze-

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kiah Mullan, shall remain unwed, he shall be permitted to remain and reside in the home situate on the said lands."

The girl listened intently to the reading of the document. "So long as he shall remain unwed." Her lips formed the soundless words. Carefully she tucked the paper into the bosom of her frock. "Let 'em throw out their flouts!" she said, rising. "Throw out their taynts if they're a-mind to—pap and his woman. Let her have her pink calicker bonnet, starched, too, if it suits her fancy." The girlish hand gripped the document, safe in the bosom of the faded dress. "With these here writin's I ain't skeert of a mountain lion!" The dark eyes flashed defiance.

But in another moment the look of sadness crept slowly back into Elvirie's face. "You'll ricollect, Woman, about Alliefair's funeral?" she pleaded softly. "I'm wantin' you to sit 'longside me in Naomi church house on Forsaken, come Sunday two weeks. Aunt Ailsie on yon coast [across the creek] will be proud to have you take the night with her ginst you make it that far. I'll name it to her you'll be there." She paused a moment, then added apologetically, "There's no satisfaction stayin' at our house, or I'd a-bid you come; there's never no tellin' when Sippi will cut one of her shines. Sippi's a aggreevatin' critter."

Two weeks later I took the night with Aunt Ailsie, next day being Sunday, and the elder having published a year before that he aimed to funeralize Alliefair, neighbor folk made ready for the occasion.

"I'll be bound to be up bright and early," Aunt Ailsie said, "so's to swinge the chickens and make pies, for there will be a passel o' folks from hither and yon comin' to the

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funeralizin' of Alliefair. Alliefair stood in high degree everywhars. And I aim to have vittals a-plenty to putt afore whosoever comes."

It was a long way from the county seat to Pig Pen Fork of Puncheon, where I found Aunt Ailsie's little house of logs that looked as though it had nestled there always. The hand-made shingles of the roof were warped and weather-beaten, and the logs were nearly two feet wide. You would know they were ancient from the manner in which they were notched and fitted together. Aunt Ailsie told me her grandfather had "cyarved" the wooden latch, too, on the door; a crude affair, though deftly whittled at the proper grain of the wood to insure its durability. Even the chain and loop on the door had been beaten out on the anvil by her kin. Aunt Ailsie still made use of a hand-made broom and basket. The hickory chair which she brought out for me had assumed a waxlike luster from long usage. It too had been made by her kinsman. Even the pickets on the fence around the kitchen door were hand split. The newest thing on the place were old Tab's kittens, which she was guarding jealously in their corn-shuck bed near the churn which Aunt Ailsie had placed in the warm chimney corner.

On the Sabbath morning when all things were ready we made our way along the creek-bed road up the hollow to Naomi church house, taking our place on the bench near the front beside Elvirie. On the men's side of the church I saw several whom I knew in connection with court cases. On a bench just ahead of ours I spied the pink, starched "calicker" bonnet. It's wearer sat with head tilted slightly to the side; leaning toward her bewhiskered mate was the

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second Mistress Hezekiah Mullan, she who had been Mississippi Tuchin, "step-maw" of Elvirie.

Brother Marbry, of deep-set eyes and flowing patriarchal beard, was already behind the little wooden pulpit, preaching in a most doleful voice. His wrinkled hand now and again turned the pages of a frayed volume that lay open before him. Time and again he looked down over his square-rimmed spectacles upon his flock. Again he moistened his thumb and turned the pages of the book, choosing another and still another text, dwelling at length upon the dangers of hell's "foir," and the wickedness of the world; sins of lust, of riches, anger and envy.

At this point he paused to "line" a hymn; he chanted a line and the flock took it up:

And must this body die  
This mortal frame decay,  
And must these active limbs of mine  
Lie molding in the grave?

Another and yet another stanza, line by line Brother Marbry intoned, the flock in turn chanting in doleful unison.

Having sung that hymn through to the end, Brother Marbry led forth in another equally mournful, during the singing of which all eyes turned upon Elvirie, whose gaze rested on the little burying ground on a near-by ridge. Her lips moved slowly though her voice raised scarce above a whisper in the singing:

In that dear old village churchyard  
I can see a mossy mound;  
I can see where mother's sleeping  
In the cold and silent ground.



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Tru-ly grows the weeping willow,  
Sweet little birds to sing at dawn;  
I have no one left to love me  
Since my mother's dead and gone.

I was young, but I remember  
Well the night my mother died;  
I stood there as her life faded  
When she called me to her side,

Saying, "Darling I must leave you,  
Angel voices guide me on;  
Pray that we will meet in heaven  
When your mother's dead and gone."

Oft I wondered to the churchyard,  
Flowers to plant with tender care;  
On the grave of my dear mother,  
Darkness finds me weeping there.

Looking at the stars above me,  
Watching for the early dawn;  
I have no one left to love me  
Since my mother's dead and gone.

There was audible sniveling throughout the little church house when the song was ended and now Brother Marbry began to speak once more. Tenderly he spoke of the departed "sister Alliefair Mullan, dead and gone a full twelve-month this day." Touchingly he spoke, exalting Alliefair's devotion to her "lone lorn child, Elvirie." Brother Marbry's voice was hushed now with solemnity as he fixed sad eyes upon dead Alliefair's one-time spouse. "Hezekiah Mullan! never lived a better man than him.

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It's right and proper for to scatter roses whilst we may, for to let a word of deservin' praise fall on the ears of them that's livin'," declared the solemn apostle of the Book, "and surely Hezekiah Mullan yonder has ever set foot in the right path. Doin' good unto his neighbor [Hezekiah had recently bestowed a fat sow upon his less thrifty neighbor, Brother Marbry] and likewise a shepherd to them that is entrusted to his fold. Ever a faithful and devoted spouse were Hezekiah to her that is gone before, Alliefair Pride-more Mullan. Why, her slightest whim were his command."

Alliefair's "lorn child" Elvirie shifted impatiently. Brother Marbry went on. "Yes, my friends, we all know that Alliefair's slightest whim were Hezekiah's joy to fulfill. All that were in his power to give of worldly goods and devotion he laid at her feet. A good shepherd indeed to them in his fold were Hezekiah Mullan." Brother Marbry's sad look now included Elvirie and the wearer of the pink calico bonnet. "Faithful and watchful is he over them left behind. The same kind father and husband he continues to be to the livin' that he were to them that has—in part—gone on before." Brother Marbry paused to drink deep from the gourd dipper in the water bucket that stood on the floor beside the pulpit. Others from the flock did likewise; mothers with babies on hips shambled forth from their benches to quench the thirst of their little ones; stalwart fellows with drooping mustaches, old men with flowing beards, young girls with lovely rosy lips, straggled at will from their benches to drink of the refreshing waters while Brother Marbry preached on and on. From time to time, at some sad reference to the departed Alliefair, her "surviving mate" dabbed at his eyes with a faded bandana.

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Mississippi sniffled audibly. But Elvirie, "my beloved and lone lorn child of my body" sat quiet, dry-eyed.

"Hit's a heap of satisfaction for to ponder on the better land," the solemn voice of the preacher was assuring his flock, "the better land where God-fearin' people like Hezekiah Mullan yonder hopes to meet his departed mate. Where them that loved her, Alliefair Pridemore Mullan, for we all feel certain she's at rest away off yonder in the blessed promised land, or ort to have loved her," he fixed a quizzical eye upon Elvirie, "them that is left behint, we hope is lookin' to be reunited to her on t'other shore." Brother Marbry placed a trembling hand upon the book. "Iffen we believe the promise of the Word, the sweet promise in thar!" he lifted high a hand and brought it down with a mighty bang upon the frayed volume. "Thar's the promise writ! Iffen we see fit to sarch for hit. Yas, my friends, for the treasures in this world we've got to sarch! Sarch!" shouted the quavering voice, "and sarch well!"

Elvirie Mullan straightened suddenly. She lifted a cautious hand to the bosom of her dress. She looked neither to right nor to left, but straight ahead. Straight at Brother Marbry.

"One of the things we've got to sarch arter," the voice was low and doleful, and he turned upon Elvirie a most piercing gaze, "iffen we aim for to lay up treasures for ourselves on this yearth, and peace in the promised land, is brotherly love. It's writ in the book!" he thumbed avidly the pages, looked searchingly at them. "It's writ!" he boomed again and again, "right hure in John, and Matthew, mebbe, too, and in Revelations. It's writ, I tell ye!" Again he thumbed the book with trembling fingers. With hands stilled now upon the book he turned once more

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upon Elvirie, pleading earnestly. "Elvirie Mullan, iven you aim to foller the footsteps of your dead maw, her as were Alliefair Pridemore in her maiden day; iven you crave to meet her in everlastin' glory, you've got a-bound to putt hatred outten your heart. Humble yourself, Elvirie. Humble yourself to the will of the Master. Hit's your bounden duty for to take your new maw, her as were Mississippi Tuchin, to your bosom. Her that your pap has seen fitten to jine hisself to in holy wedlock. Her that wears the name of the second Mistress Hezekiah Mullan."

Elvirie sat like a figure of stone. The eyes of the flock now turned upon her. Women folk peered from beneath dilapidated slat bonnets. Sippi's pink bonnet, starched stiff as a plank, had come closer toward the protecting shoulder of her mate. A titter came from a far corner of the little log church house, but it was lost almost instantly in the awful silence.

Brother Marbry solemnly lifted the book and held it in wide-spread palm. His arm was extended far over the little wooden pulpit. "Don't you never aim to tender your heart, Elvirie Mullan?" he beseeched in a trembling voice. "Ain't you ever aimin' to sarch in the Word that is writ, for the promise?" The book, extended now in outstretched hand toward Elvirie, swayed slightly. "Don't you aim to sarch," admonished the grave voice, "for the treasures in this world and—"

"I have sarched!" cried Elvirie exultantly, "I've sarched and found a treasure! I got the witness right hure!" She struck her bosom with a quick hand as she arose.

"Amen!" boomed Brother Marbry, before the surprised Elvirie could utter another word. "Amen!" he roared,

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"Elvirie's got the witness in her breast!" he thundered excitedly.

"Amen!" echoed Hezekiah Mullan.

"Amen!" re-echoed the gathering. "Elvirie's sarched!"

"Elvirie's got the witness in her breast!" chanted old and young in ceaseless monotone.

Even had she tried to explain, Elvirie's feeble protest would have been lost in the hysterical confusion.

"Praise the Lord! Amen!" chanted the flock as they surged about Alliefair's "lorn child," shaking her hand again and again, throwing their trembling arms about her shoulders, Sippi, the second mate of Hezekiah Mullan, shouting louder than all the rest and tugging at the hand of the amazed Elvirie.

"I'm aimin' to treat you like my own flesh and blood from this day on," shouted Sippi, clapping her hands loudly, high above her head. "I aim to love this child like the lamb of my bosom."

This sudden sign of peace, coming as it did when his arm was stretched full length over the pulpit, caught Brother Marbry unawares. The book trembled in his open palm and dropped with a thud.

The frayed volume lay open on the floor, revealing its faded half title. Printed at the top of the page in Old English letters were these words:

### CHAUCER'S CANTERBURY TALES

and below, in quaint script, was penned:

*Jonathan Mayberry, his book*  
*North Lees      1704      Yorkshire*  
*Honor the King      Fear the Lord*

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To be sure, the entire flock knew that Brother Marbry could neither read nor write. They knew full well that the old man took pride in having a book before him. "He so craves larnin'," Nace Tackett told me that day, "he likes to make on like he can sure enough read the Script're. Ever packs along that book into the pulpit. It's got a hide [leather] kiver and has the favorance of the Good Book that Brother Lindsay ever packed with him in this country long ago, pap says. I'm satisfied," Nace Tackett confided, with a dubious look in his eye, "it ain't a Bible a-tall. We're sartin of it, most of us, but if it pleasures old Brother Marbry to make on like he's takin' his text from 'twixt its kivers and readin' from its pages, there's no harm done. That's how we all feel about it. And no livin' soul amongst us would ever make Brother Marbry shamefaced by axin' about that book. Nohow," he added in a voice filled with sympathy and understanding, "do you appreciate, Woman, that's all the book old Brother Marbry owns on this yearth? His folks left it to him. 'Pears like the book gives him confidence for to preach the Word." Nace Tackett's voice was hushed with tenderness. "The Script're says, 'Blessed are the peacemakers,' and sartin as we live, Brother Marbry is numbered among them. You bore witness to his goodness today."

From the doorway of Naomi church house on Forsaken I watched Brother Jonathan Marbry ride contentedly homeward on his bony nag, unaware of the rare treasure that was his, the book evidencing his English kinship under his arm, "him that was rightly a Mayberry." Unaware, too, was Brother Marbry, of that other treasure which Elvirie had "sarched and found."

Though the rest had gone their way, a few lingered to

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sing yet another hymn beside the grave-house of Alliefair Pridemore Mullan. A crude grave-house it was, of rough planks and a clapboard roof, to shelter her resting place against snow and sleet, wind and rain. Elvirie herself with her own hands had helped to make it, while dead Alliefair's own blood uncle, who now lingered to "line" her favorite hymn tune from the *Songster*, had lent a helpin' hand.

Elvirie, with the faintest whimsical smile, stood close by, with the women folk of dead Alliefair's kin standing resolutely at her side to "jine" in the song.

"Funeralizin' " the dead long after burial is an ancient mountain custom that was born of necessity. In the early days there were few preachers, so when death came, though burial followed at once, the bereaved family awaited the coming of the itinerant preacher, possibly for months before their loved one could be eulogized. Then, too, in days when there was no means of communication and they had only to rely on the grapevine system of word-of-mouth messages, it took a long time to pass the word around to friends and relatives near and far. So the custom began of having the preacher "publish" the funeral of a departed loved one, to take place as far ahead as a whole year. In this way the word passed even to remote coves and hollows so that when the day came there was a goodly gathering at the "funeralizin'." The custom continues today, though it has taken on a more imposing aspect.

Last summer (1939) I attended for the second time the "funeralizin' " of an old friend. Some call such service now a "memorial service." My old friend, having been a prosperous man, left money to provide an annual memorial

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service for himself. A great barbecue is prepared and people come by the hundreds. Whole lambs are roasted over pits of glowing log fires; beeves are quartered and roasted by one who knows the art, and great iron kettles are filled with delicious boiling vegetables. There is hymn singing and again a eulogy over the departed brother. The occasion is a cheery one. Friends meet with happy handclasp, talking of crops, of bygone days. Last year the throng was so great it spread out into the valley. Some of us climbed the hill to the burying ground where rested the remains of our old friend. Not beneath a home-carved "dornick," bless you, but under a giant shaft of costly marble that cast a long shadow over the ivy-covered grave. "Look!" cried a young kinsman of the departed, "the shadder of grandsir's tomb reaches nigh to the gatherin' down yonder in the valley. It's a sign his race will be lasty."

The old man, like his Revolutionary forbears, made sure that his grave should not go unmarked. He himself bought the monument and saw to it that it was placed in the family burying ground before his demise.

In pioneer days a religious meeting—any religious gathering is called by mountain folk a "meeting," while a political gathering is called a "speaking"—would last all of a week, and a prosperous family was known to provide food and lodging for all who came. The custom survives to this day, especially among the Regular Primitive Baptists on Tug Fork and on Little Blaine.

The gathering of the Baptists has reached vast proportions. Founded in 1813, it is called the Baptist Association, and is composed of many Associations, such as Big Sandy Valley Association, Burning Spring Association, and so on. These in turn are made up of many churches in a given



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district. My own "Traipsin' Woman" cabin on the Mayo Trail was dedicated by Brother Dawson, a devout member of the Regular Primitive Baptist faith, of the Burning Spring Association, who preached the first sermon in that rugged house of logs and thus consecrated it to the worship of the Master. It would be considered a breach of trust and confidence if a minister of another denomination were permitted to hold service within the cabin, and if such should happen, Brother Dawson himself told me, "us Regular Primitive Baptists would never again hold meetin' under this roof."

Each church, with its elders, moderators, clerks, and members in good standing, subscribe to the constitution of the Association. According to Article Two of their constitution, Regular Primitive Baptists "believe that the Lord's Supper and the washing of the saints' feet are ordinances of the Lord and are to be continued by the church until His second coming." They are a people who hold steadfastly to their beliefs. At one time, some of the very devout Primitive Baptists did not believe in teaching the story of Santa Claus; they considered it wrong to teach what they termed "a lie." In pioneer days they did not even trim a Christmas tree. Later, a tree came to be permitted, but with one clear, bright light only; no colored lights, no glistening, tinsel toys.

Even then they were not wholly solemn and without merriment. The Yuletide was celebrated over a period of twelve days, from December twenty-fifth, New Christmas, to January sixth, Old Christmas. Each evening the young people gathered at one another's homes for play games and carol singing, and on these occasions they practiced an amusing old custom called "popping the candle." The

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host bored a small hole in to the wick near the bottom of a candle, and into this he poured a pinch of gun powder. When the candle burned down to this point—and it was timed not to do so until around midnight—and the candle popped, that was the signal for the gathering to break up and the guests to go their ways.

Burning Spring Association held its one hundred and seventeenth annual session in 1937, which I had the joy and privilege of attending at Lacy Valley Church in Magoffin County. In the summer of 1939 I attended such a meeting on Blaine, where a great feast was prepared in the open. Beef, lamb, pork, were roasted over glowing logs in deep-dug pits. Again the great iron kettle, used betimes at hog killin', for soap making and for boiling clothes, was used for boiling corn on the cob and other vegetables, and there were even open ovens for baking corn bread for this great religious gathering. Women folk prepare for the "Association" days in advance, making pies and cakes. Indeed, they look forward eagerly from year to year to "Association week." Old and young anticipate the occasion with joy equal to that with which in bygone days they looked forward to the county fair.

At one Association which I attended, old Aunt Rachel made johnny cakes for some of the visiting preachers from Elliott County. "I mind the time," the old woman told me, "when ma made johnny cakes for a passel of preachers that come to meetin' from out in Magoffin. She used bear's oil for the shortenin'. And honey, we had, wild honey, bless you, nigh as plentiful as sorghum is today. In them days we had no roast lamb nor pork, the wolves was too plentiful. Wolves is destructious varmints on innocent lambs. But ginst the men folks got them varmints killed

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off, a body could raise all the sheep they needed. Hit give us wimmin folks something to do, too. There warn't a house on the creek nor in nary holler that didn't have a spinnin' wheel, a reel and a loom. Raised our own flax. I ricollict long afore I were turned five year old I larnt to fill the quills. Sat alongside Granny with my tasks whilst she knit stockings for us wimmin folks and socks for the men. Even down to the least uns had their tasks, in my young day, pickin' burs outten wool, pullin' flax, rollin' yarn into a ball so's to be handy for Granny with her knit-tin'. Seemed like folks in them days took delight in work around the fireside, singin' and makin' talk whilst our hands were busy." Old Aunt Rachel sighed wistfully over her memories, and then as she mixed more johnny cakes she added, "There was no end of maples in that day and time that give us maple sugar, and wild honey we had in abundance. We always had enough sweetnin' to run us through a whole year. Folks in them days was proper dressed too," old Rachel's eyes were fixed critically upon a young lass in a knee frock, high heels, and a bleached permanent. "Us wimmin folks didn't bare our carcass to the world in my young day, like that peert critter comin' up the road yonder. And men folks, too, were fit and proper in their garmints. My grandsir wore breeches made of dressed deerskin, had shoes, too, of the same, and so did Granny."

Though some ways change, mountain folk still hold to the manner of holding "meeting"; that is, the day and place is fixed, say, at Bethel Church on the second and third Saturdays and Sundays of the month; at Laurel on the first and, if the dates allow, the fifth, Saturdays and Sundays; at Paint on the fourth Saturday and Sunday, and

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so on. Devout members, so long have their forbears done without the printed page, are able to hold these dates accurately in their mind. They need no calendar, though the Association does publish a small booklet setting forth the time and place of meetings and the activities of the churches of the Association.

There is still to be found the itinerant preacher who keeps his "app'intments," preaching the first Sunday of the month on Otter Trail, the second on Indian Run, the third on Troublesome. And if you are so minded, after meeting, you may journey on to the burying ground and see for yourself that the loved ones, though long since dead, have not been forgotten. There's a bouquet of paper flowers in a glass case, a trinket of a young maiden, a play pretty of a baby child, a poppet [doll] of a little girl. Even a picture of a loved one in a glass-covered box at the head of the grave is frequently to be found. Indeed, it was a small picture of Brother Joshua beside his wife which I made with my camera, which he with loving care enclosed with his trembling hands in such a glass-covered case and placed at the head of her grave. He led me solemnly to the spot that I might see for myself.

If you tarry long enough in the Big Sandy country you are sure to meet old Brother Joshua of faded eye and flowing white beard, trudging along on his way to comfort a dying sinner, or to offer condolence to those bereaved, or, perhaps, if it is a fair summer day, to a "baptizin'" in one of the creeks. For, even though he is stooped of shoulder and faltering of step, Brother Joshua vows, "I aim to keep on here in the Master's vineyard as long as there's a sinner cryin' out for help, as long as these humble hands can

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minister baptism." He is jealous of his reputation of having baptized more people than any other person in all the Big Sandy country and he defends it at all hazards.

Once, so the story goes, when the waters of the creek were frozen over and the ice had to be broken, the old fellow steadfastly refused to let a younger pastor take his place. He wrapped a long wool scarf about his throat, put on ear muffs, red yarn mittens, a heavy overcoat and, stuffing his breeches into high-topped boots, waded into the chilly waters, leading the hesitant penitent with a firm hand. It was said that the "j'iner," himself a young man, upon nearing the frozen creek remonstrated with Brother Joshua, pleading with the old fellow not to undertake it.

"I'm afeared it's too much for one of your years, Brother Joshua," the convert argued.

"There's no time to halt in the salvation of a soul," Brother Joshua replied. "A body's got to ketch a penitent sinner and hold him fast." He increased the grip of his mittened hand upon the younger man's arm as with high-lifted boot he stomped the ice, broke it, and trudged into the water. For all his teeth were chattering, he managed to repeat the words of baptism, and then immersed the young man beneath the ice-filled waters. But in bringing him up, what with the lad's struggle, Brother Joshua lost his mitten and his wide-brimmed felt, which had been placed too near the rim of the broken ice. Both were caught in the swirling stream.

"Ketch 'em, fellers!" shouted the old man of flowing white beard, waving a hand wildly, "ketch 'em!" Someone on shore mistook the command to mean a young couple who stood arm in arm near by, looking on with rapt atten-

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tion. Two stalwart men ran to the side of the protesting couple and rushed them straight to the water's edge and were about to drag them in to the preacher's side. Luckily, Brother Joshua by this time took in the situation and shouted above the hilarious confusion. "Ketch 'em! I mean my wearing clothes—my hat yonder and my mittens, afore they get swollered up in the waters and are packed plumb down to the mouth of Big Sandy."

Quick hands were to the rescue. The released courting couple dashed off up the hillside as fast as their feet would carry them. And Brother Joshua, muddy hat and mittens in hand, teeth chattering, shambled off to a waiting wagon that carried him to the warm fireside of friendly neighbors.

The custom of foot washing is devoutly followed by the Regular Primitive Baptists, and for this occasion also, the women make great preparation in cooking, and anyone is welcome to share the feast. Foot washing is a part of the communion service and takes place in the summer months. Upon this occasion the women who are in good standing—who have kept the faith—are seated on two benches facing each other on one side of the church at the front. On the opposite side two benches are similarly placed and occupied by the men. Between the two is a small table on which a white cloth conceals an object in the center no taller than a castor. On the floor beneath the table, beside the water bucket with its dipper, are two small tin basins.

At the beginning of the service I have often heard the congregation join in singing a "family song," that is, each stanza begins with the name of a different member of the family, like this:

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O father will you meet me  
On Canaan's happy shore?

And continuing through to "mother," "sister," "brother," "children." At the proper time the moderator invites an elder to come forward and assist. He goes to the table and lifts the cloth, revealing a plate of bread and a pitcher of blackberry juice which has been provided by the wife of one of the pastors. "We'll eat of the unleavened bread and partake of the wine," he announces, and then having broken the bread in small pieces he passes it first to the women, then to the men, who have already removed their shoes and stockings. During this time they usually sing a hymn such as:

Twelve months more have rolled around  
Since we attended on this ground;  
Ten thousand scenes have marked the year,  
Since we met last to worship here.

When the long and doleful song is finished, again the pastor quotes from the Scripture: "Jesus . . . riseth from supper and layeth aside His garments." At this the men folk remove their coats and hang them on wall pegs with their hats. ". . . Layeth aside His garments," repeats the pastor solemnly, "and He took a towel, and girded Himself."

And now a brother, in good standing you may be sure, takes a towel that lies folded on the table, ties it about his waist, making one loop and leaving a long end with which to dry the feet of his brother. They take turns, each washing the feet of the other, until everyone seated on the two benches has performed this act of humility.

When all have once more put on their shoes there is

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much shouting, weeping, hand clasping and hand clapping, both women and men elbowing around in confusion. Sometimes a penitent becomes quite happy and shouts aloud in broken sobs that he is through with sin and worldly ways forever. Then one after the other slap the hand of the penitent, weep with him, shout with him if they feel so impelled, and finally the meeting breaks up. The moderator "publishes" [announces] the time and place of the next meeting and all leave the church to linger for a time under the shady trees for friendly visiting and feasting.

"Foot washin', hymn singin', vittals and j'inin', courtin' and marryin' all go hand in hand," the older women of the mountains will tell you. And from what I have observed at the many meetings I have attended, I'm sure the old match makers are right. They are ever present to keep a watchful eye on courtin' couples at a foot washin', a baptizin', and a funeralizin'. Ever ready and eager to help along a courtin' case by praising one to the other.

The minute an older woman hears that a fair maiden is "talkin'" she takes it upon herself to "start a quilt" for the "fair bride-to-be." Eagerly she sits by young Nelle's side to start her right. And if Nelle should ask innocently enough, "Aunt Rosie, who told you that Buford and I are talkin'?" Aunt Rosie, with eyes fixed upon the quilt patches, coyly declares, "A little bird told me, Nelle, so there." It is part of the game. Then she turns to talk of quilts.

"Now that is the 'Double Weddin' Ring,'" Aunt Rosie with a steady finger points the pattern of her favorite quilt. "And it fetches good luck, my lass, and happiness to the





Washing by the creek



*Jacumski*

The battlin' trough

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bride who pieces that pattern first of all." And before the blushing Nelle can offer a word, Aunt Rosie with needle and thread starts the first block of the pattern, and stitches away, forming one block and then another, and showing Nelle just how to "lay the fair pink close by the sky-blue piece of calico" to form the pattern. As she sews, Aunt Rosie sings, and lovely Nelle gives ear, you may be sure, to what is said and sung. The favorite verse of the quilting song, which names all the various patterns, has always been, for me:

My sister made the "Snowball" and the "Rose";  
She lives alone, down Lonesome Holler ways,  
An old maid? Yes, but not from lack of beaux;  
Hit sorter hurts to ricollict them days—  
Poor Jane, she loved Thomas too, you see—  
But Tom, somehow, he allus favored me.

Possibly nowhere in the nation has simple and wholesome life around the fireside been so genuinely preserved as in the Big Sandy country. Mothers are not too busy to stop churning or even cooking to teach the children a play-game song. And if Aunt Rosie drops in to sit a spell, she'll lay aside her sewing or knitting to show her young kinfolk how to play "Fist-stalk," or "Finger game play song," "Pawpaw Patch," or "Sweet Potatoes Cut and Dried," a swinging song that is a great favorite with the smaller children. If the older girls join in you may be sure they'll call for "Charlie Condemned," or "Sad Condition," both of which permit of harmless kissing; the former goes back to the sixteenth century, while the latter, a courting play-game song, dates to the Civil War. The young boys find their fun in playing and singing "Black-

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smith Shop," which lends itself to many a lusty shout and vigorous gesture. When the young people have tired of singing games the older, more serious-minded of the group will bring out a small wood box from a shelf in the chimney corner containing grains of red and yellow corn, and a board marked off something like a checker board except that cross lines are drawn in each square. With these they spend many happy hours playing "Fox and Geese," or "Sheep's Skin," or "Fox."

Boys delight to whistle, and to add volume to their efforts, fashion a whistle of maple or papaw, cut in the spring so that the bark will loosen readily. It is the same instrument, and yet a far cry, this crude mountain whistle, from the recorder of the sixteenth century, mentioned frequently by Shakespeare, and by Pepys in his diary, April 8, 1668. As early as 1575, Queen Elizabeth was entertained by its music at Kenilworth Castle, and we are told that good Queen Bess herself was a skilled performer upon this early flute.

Mountain children are naturally ingenious. I have never come upon a cabin in the Big Sandy country too humble to afford a jackknife for the boys, who never grow tired of whittling some trinket for amusement, or even things of use: a handle for a corn cutter, a butter paddle, a bread bowl.

Of special satisfaction and comfort is a jackknife to a crippled boy like Elias. Proudly he showed me a small chair which he had whittled and placed patiently, stick by stick, in a bottle.

"It must have taken a long time to make the chair," I remarked, for we of the level land rarely ask direct questions in the mountains of Kentucky.

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"No," he answered, "it taken jest a leetle spell to fashion the cheer. The job were to putt it in the bottle through that pesterin' leetle neck."

I wondered what ingenious tools young Elias, who had never been able to walk a step in his life of fourteen years, had used at the task. But before the question could be asked he produced from his breeches pocket two rusty wires which he straightened out, and showed me how, with them, he placed one stick at a time through the bottle neck until the chair was completed.

Men and boys often make their own musical instruments. I have seen a banjo whittled from white oak, with a coon hide for a sounding head. Many a cat, known to be a "fowl-killin' varment," has met its end for such "thievin'" and been transformed into a sounding head for a homemade "banjer" whilst its "inners" have supplied the strings for the crude musical instrument.

Children of the Big Sandy country never lack for amusement: good, wholesome amusement. In summer there's swimming, fishing, riding with their parents to meeting, where, within proper distance, others come not so much to hear the Word as to swap horses. "Horse jockeyin'" conducted at these well-attended religious occasions is both pleasant and profitable. Men and boys put their nags through their various paces and usually find a buyer or someone who is willing to "swap."

While some cling steadfastly to old and traditional ways, others are equally prone to give up the old customs and heirlooms.

One day I stopped in to see old Huldie Borders, on Beaver Creek. She was canning blackberries and tomatoes,

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and while I helped her wash earthen jars, and seal them, we talked of many things.

"Quare how folks usen to fear tomatoes. I mind the time I ett my first one. Some who'd never tasted the likes—afear-ed to—called 'em devil's apples, claimed they were pizen as a sarpint. Well, when I ett one bright red one they all vowed I'd die before sundown. That were sixty-odd year ago and here I am yit." She chuckled softly, as she made fast another tin lid on its earthen jar. When the task was finished and the hot canned fruit placed on a bench to cool outside the kitchen door, old Huldie got in a big way of talking of bygone days, of how her grandsir and his brothers "fit the Red Coats." "Granny Borders would a foird the old flintlock yonder too," glancing at the gun in the wall hooks, "if need be. But wimmin folks in them days had to look to their weavin' and spinnin' and cookin' for the family. My Granny birthed eighteen babes. They all growed up and married off. Settled in this country. Granny was give up to be the best weaver on this creek. We've got a kiverlid she wove in the days of the Revolution. Come," she invited, "see for yourself."

With that the little old woman climbed the wall ladder to the loft, as nimbly as a girl in her teens. I followed at her heels.

"Mind," she warned, "don't hit your head agin the jystes."

She delved deep into an old trunk and brought out the coverlid.

"Granny wove it," she explained, proudly spreading it upon her knees as she sat on the hide-covered trunk, "and she made her own dyes from mather roots and warnut bark." That was old Huldie's way of saying madder and

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walnut. "See," she said, "the colors are nigh as bright as ever."

Later that day, before sunset, we climbed the steep mountain path that led to the family burying ground, following the split-rail fence that her grandfather had built in his youth. There in the hilltop place of the dead, four soldiers of the Revolution slept under crumbling tombstones, upon which remained the faint tracing of the soldiers' names and the battles in which they had fought.

"Josephus yonder," she pointed to a flat slab of stone, "fetched that dornick his own self, they say, and putt it there with his own hands. Cyarved like you see it. Wanted to make sure we'd know where his corpse were a-restin'. Fancy," she paused to survey the steep ascent which we, empty handed, had traveled with great effort, "how winded the pore old feller were ginst he clomb this mountainside a-packin' that dornick, his tombrock, on his shoulder. Somethin' like the Good Lord a-packin' his cross up Calvary. I've hear-ed it said Josephus's hands was wore plumb raw from his labors, and bleedin'. His woman had to wrop his hands in linen soaked in oil to help ease his misery."

With Chaucer and Spenser, old Huldie Borders at the head of Beaver Creek said "wropt" for wrapped, "clomb" for climbed, "jystes" for joists. And in saying "mather" for madder was she not as correct as Lord Bacon's and Sir Philip Sidney's "murther" for murder? In reverse, the mountain folk say with the Elizabethans "furder" for further.

There are many instances in the Big Sandy country of this survival of old words which have long since vanished from current usage elsewhere. Elvirie Mullan, I took notice, for all she could neither read nor write, said

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"sopped up the tears," quite unaware of echoing Shakespeare. She had no knowledge of Spenser, though with him she said "yit" for yet, and her Aunt Ailsie said she would "swinge" the chicken, using the same word as Spenser in:

The scorching flame sore swunged all his face.

Lucretia and her father, like Chaucer, added "es" to form the plural of such a word as nest—"nestes." Such words as "breskit," meaning liveliness, vigor, and "dornick," a headstone, are practically obsolete in any form, except in this pocket of the language where they are preserved.

One fair day I struck out at sunup along another fork of a creek flowing into Big Sandy, with careful directions from old Huldie how to find the Lovell place. I had been wanting to visit it for some time. "Hit bein' the fore part of the week," she had said on second thought, "more'n likely you'll find Elizabeth and her youngins washin', down by the creek. Elizabeth taken after the Lovells, she's peart at work. Didn't change her ways by marryin', only her name. Says she aims to live on at the Lovell place all her days and wants her offspring to do the same."

Upon reaching the log house almost hidden by wild grape and morning-glory vines, I lifted the latch on the gate and walked along the flower-bordered path. Though I called "Hallo!" neither woman nor child appeared in the open doorway. I paused on the gravel walk and called again, this time a much louder "Hallo!" At once there came a faint echo from the distance, whereupon I followed the direction from which the greeting came, along the footpath through the garden, then through the willows down to the creek.



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A young woman was stooping over a hollowed log filled with soapy water, dabbling with clothes. In one hand she held a wooden paddle with which she beat the wet garments on a flattened end of the log trough. A battling trough! A battler of Shakespeare's time, bless you, here in the heart of the Big Sandy country.

Suddenly the woman looked up. At sight of me she straightened. Shaking the soapsuds from her hands, having tossed the garment she was beating into a wooden bowl filled with indigo-blue water beside the trough, she wiped her hands on her apron. "Howdy!" she said shyly, while three little girls, seated on a log that spanned the brook, looked down at their toes. The woman's glance moved from my portable typewriter to the brief case and camera in my other hand. Then a friendly smile lighted her face. "You're the Traipsin' Woman, I'm satisfied, on account of you packin' them quare contrapshuns along. Benjamin and me ketched sight of you once at the courthouse off yander in Elliott. His folks had a line-fight case with Twisden's folks. Ricollect?"

I did remember, I told her. I had reported the testimony in the case. That had been long ago, in my early days of court reporting. Though years had passed she had not forgotten the occasion.

"Twisden's folks," the young woman went on, "they're a techeous race. Fact is, they're plumb contrarious! But nohow, the case were settled," she paused a second, then added quickly, "settled, and peaceable like too. Though I were afear-ed for a time. Old Ephraim Twisden were in a plumb franzy ginst the trial were over. Ricollect? Him that had kilt with his own hand all of ninety-and-nine b'ar in his lifetime and were beggin' the good Lord for to spare

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him to kill anuther'n afore he died. He's got some of the pelts, has old Ephraim, to this day. That is to say, his folks has got 'em. Not afear-ed of no livin' critter nor varmint were old Ephraim. But the line-fight case just putt him in a franzy and he couldn't go no funder. Jest quiled down and died all of a suddint."

I was charmed with the quaint speech of the woman who, here in this isolated pocket of Kentucky, clung to Elizabethan speech. With Milton she said "contrarious," with Lord Bacon she vowed her old neighbor could go no "funder"; she said "afear-ed" with Lady Macbeth and "franzy" and "techeous" with other characters of Shakespeare.

"I'm Benjamin's woman," she explained with quiet dignity, "an' these," her glance included the three little girls on the log, "are our children. Hester!" she addressed the eldest, "scrouge over and make room for the Traipsin' Woman. You're bound to be mannerly to strangers." The child obeyed eagerly and I sat beside her, putting my things down on the bank.

"I allow you've made the acquaintance of some of my folks in your travels in these mountains and on England's shores when you journeyed acrost the briny deep. We've hear-ed talk of your travels. How you've sailed the mighty deep, how you've been a fur piece from home. Iffen I'd knowed in time I'd a sent some blackberry 'zarves to my kin folks over there by you. I were a Lovell! Old Jethro's daughter. Elizabeth Lovell were my maiden name."

While she spoke a spotted cow had come into view, nibbling at the green grass along the fence row. "Hester!" the mother spoke sharply to the eldest of the three little girls, "thar's Twisden's piedy heifer! That cow-brute will

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ever use whar the grass grows greenest. Take the battler and drive her on her own side of the fence."

Taking the proffered battling stick the little girl hurried to obey her mother's command. "Begone!" the child cried contemptuously as she ran after the cow kicking up its heels as it lumbered along.

"Hit's an antic heifer," Elizabeth observed and then offered half apologetically, "I'm satisfied hit's unbeknown to Twisden's folks that their cow-brute is ever pesterin' us. Though if we wuz to name it to them they'd be mad as a sarpint."

When people of the Big Sandy country say "allow" they are not aware that Hakluyt prefers it to "assume." Fletcher wrote:

I will give thee for thy food  
No fish that useth in the mud,

in the same way that Elizabeth said "use where the grass grows greenest." Her "mought" for "might" is like Spenser's:

So sound he slept that naught mought him awake.

Milton and Shakespeare's Caliban preceded her with "pieded" and Hamlet put "an antic disposition on." Even little Hester shouts contemptuously to the neighbor's cow, "Begone!" a kingly word of Shakespeare's time. And when this woman observes that I had been a "fur" piece from home she uses the same word that Sir Philip Sidney used to express distance.

"Twisden's folks," Elizabeth repeated, "is a techeous race, and contrarious, even down to old Granny Twisden, and her nigh on to a hundred year old, with one foot in

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the grave." Her voice dropped to a whisper, but the girls heard. "The talk was in bygone days that old Granny Twisden were witchy! A heap o' people said as much. Though I can't rightly say that I ever knowed the old woman to cast a haynt, or bewitch none of my folks."

At this the three little girls huddled together, and Hester, the eldest, who had returned from driving the cow off their side of the split-rail fence, put a protecting arm around her small sisters, who sat wide-eyed, fearful. Elizabeth Lovell viewed the three with concern. "A body don't need to be afeared of an old critter like Granny Twisden. For all she mought a-been witchy in her day and had to do with haynts and the ways of the devil, for all she mought a-caused that dog of Blanchard's to turn fittyfied. The old critter's flighty and drinlin' now. Past goin'. Can't walk a step. Just sots all day in her cheer. They have to drag her cheer to the table, have to putt her vittals in her mouth. Her day for castin' spells on dumb critters and bewitchin' them she held grudge agin is past and gone."

The three little girls on the log beside me smiled with contented reassurance and the two smaller ones began to sing a gay frolic tune:

Froggy in the meadow,  
Can't get him out;  
Take a little stick  
And stir him all about.

"Delinthia! Saphronia!" Hester turned critically upon the younger two. "That ditty is a heap prettier to sing it this way:

Sugar in the gourd,  
Can't get it out;

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Take a little stick  
And stir it all about."

Once more Elizabeth, having picked up the battling stick where Hester had dropped it, set to her task with a vim.

"Wouldn't it be easier if you had a washboard?" I ventured. "How can you ever get the clothes clean that way?"

"Clean! You jest wait and see for yourself. Ginst I sob 'em and rensh 'em and rub 'em by hand hure in the trough and beat 'em with the battler here on the battlin' bench, there'll not be nary grain o' dirt left in our wearin' clothes." She viewed the primitive washtub contentedly. "Hit's handy," she said, "and nohow, boughten tubs and store soap and washboards and sech as that costes more'n a body can pay and they're not nigh as lasty as homemade things." She worked a moment, then explained: "Of course you appreciate, Woman, that my grandsir, afore us, he made a heap bigger battlin' trough than this. He taken a poplar log about six feet long, split it in half and turned the flat side up like you see this. Then one end he hollowed out like this is, and you could soak all the wearin' clothes, and the bed kivvers, and piller slips, and table kivvers, too, in it at once. Then on t'other end of the trough he left the log flat, didn't holler it out; a place nearly four feet long and two feet wide. But in them days timber was powerful big. Now it 'pears like they cut down a tree afore it gets its growth. Have it rafted together and floatin' down Big Sandy and sawed into planks no wider'n a span. Time'll come, I reckon, when a body can't find a log big enough to make a honey stand, let alone a battlin' trough." As she spoke she pulled out of the end of the primitive

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washtub a corn cob that quite filled the small opening, and the soapy water ran out quickly. With a gourd dipper she refilled the battling trough and continued with her task.

When the washing was finished and hung on the rail fence to dry, my hostess insisted that I stay and eat with them. She cooked at the hearth, using an iron pot for stewing the potatoes, and a skillet with feet, heaping on its iron lid a shovel of hot coals that made the chicken fry quickly to a delicious tenderness.

It was amazing and interesting to note that she, who doubtless never heard of Chaucer, of Beaumont or Nash, said with these Elizabethan writers "seche" for such, "agin" for against, "drinlin'" for frail, "lasty" for enduring, "yander" for yonder. And Piers Plowman wrote of a "heap" of people, even as many old folk in the Big Sandy country do to this day. Many such words which were good Elizabethan English sound strange, even awkward, to those who have not considered their origin. Such words as "drinlin'," "lasty," "piedy," of Elizabethan England, long since forgotten elsewhere, I have come upon in usage to-day only in the Big Sandy country.

In a far corner of Floyd County I stopped at a little log house hidden between high mountain walls to talk with an old man and his wife. Uncle Jason and Aunt Polly were seated on the stoop, each occupied with his own task. For all it was summer, Aunt Polly's wrinkled hands were busily occupied with shining knitting needles that glistened in the sunlight as they moved steadily in and out of the bright red yarn. "A body's got to look ahead," she said in her slow mountain way, "so's to have stockings to kiver the feet of the least 'uns ginst the snow flies."

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She swayed slowly to and fro in her chair, turning her faded eyes now and then toward Uncle Jason. Though he had greeted me in a most friendly manner—it is ever the way of Kentucky mountain people—once the old man had brought me a chair and also “putt down” my portable and brief case and camera, he had gone at once to resume his laborious work of grinding corn in a primitive handmill rigged up on the far end of the stoop. A crude affair it was: a hollowed log in which rested two round stones, a small one on top of the other about the size of a grindstone. “It’s a quern,” Uncle Jason explained when I looked inquiringly at the handmill. “Leastwise, that’s what Scotch people call it.”

In the center of the top stone was a small hole through which he slowly fed grains of corn with one hand, while with the other he turned the stone around and around by means of a limber branch about a yard long, one end of which was thrust into a small hole near the edge of the flat stone. The other end of the branch was tied with a rope suspended from the rafters of the stoop. As he laboriously fed the grains of corn and propelled the stone with a trembling hand, a stream of meal began to trickle from a spout in the side of the log which held the stones.

To my amazement, as he propelled the old handmill Uncle Jason began to sing a Scotch “flyting” or “scolding” ballad, an answering back ballad, and at the proper point, Aunt Polly took it up. The song led her thoughts back, and Aunt Polly spoke in a quavering voice. “Jason, you mind in our young day there come your kin folks from Virginny and one night at the frolic at Aunt Barbary’s house they fell to singin’ song ballets and play-game songs? A hierling of your grandsir was there. It were at the throng

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of harvest—your grandsir had a master crop of wheat. And your Uncle Andrew McKenzie—Drew we allus called his name—he sung a ditty called ‘The Sailor and the Shepherdess.’ But eh, law,” old Aunt Polly sighed contentedly, “the sailor and the shepherdess, they lived in peace and pleasure on account,” she leaned forward to confide to me the reason, “he foresaken the sea and quit rovin’. Woman,” Aunt Polly fixed me with a searching eye, “ginst you marry you best take a man that loves the yearth and is willin’ to settle down and raise him some bread and property.” The old woman waxed enthusiastic. “Why with property, say a few hogs, a cow-brute and a nag or two, and a passel o’ chickens and a patch o’ corn and some sugar cane, a body can make out first rate. Woman!” warned the match maker, “don’t never cast your eye on no doughty feller. To be sure, there’s no harm in men folks bein’ fixy and havin’ a Sunday suit but,” she lifted a warning finger, “choose a man that’s got breskit and then he’ll have sil’er in his pocket and won’t have to valley no man. Yas,” she mused, a tender glance bestowed on her mate toiling patiently at the handmill, “stren’th and patience and a willin’ hand—like Jason yonder—he ain’t beholden to no one, yearns what we eat, got a scope o’ land.” The faded eyes swept the far-off meadow and ridge with a look of proud possession.

When Aunt Polly spoke of the “throng” of harvest and Uncle Jason told of the “quern,” you’d know then and there the forbears of both had come from Scotland, even if they hadn’t said as much. After the old couple had passed away their kin folk hauled the quern down to my “Wee House in the Wood,” where it is now a prized addition to my small museum of Kentucky mountain treasures.



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Sometimes new-fangled ways are thrust upon old folks much to their dismay, though they may try to instill their notions into the "least uns" under the roof. It may be a daughter-in-law who walks rough shod over the old woman's "fogey ways" and sets up a new and different order of living within their humble walls.

"There's old Granny Tomlin a-suckin' her pipe. Pore old critter, all she's fitten for is to mind the babe in its crib. Awful easy-goin' is Granny. Bless you," it was Lettie Clayton who told me as much when I met her on the road to Tomlin's, "didn't she let Tobe's woman, Hessie Bolin were her maiden name, wheedle her into havin' the foir-place plumb dobbed up with bricks, and a new-fangled mantel shelft putt o'er it? But lan' sakes, they ain't nary one of the whole family that sees a bit o' health since. The babe in its crib is plumb puny with croup. Granny herself is ever complainin' of a misery in her chist, or a risin' in her side. And little Mintie is barkin' like a frog, soon as winter sets in. They're all takin' a course of medicine; keep the bottles handy on the mantel shelft. They've plumb give up home cures." That was the talk of the Tomlins' neighbor, Lettie Clayton, as we stood at the roadside.

"What's more, Hessie up and sent off the little tintype of her pap and had a great big likeness made off from it and hung it on the wall above that new-fangled foirboard. When the babe first clapped eyes on it, and little Mintie, too, they both screamed like they were bewitched and Hessie and Granny had all they could do to quile the youngins down. Hessie is plumb uppity! Nothin's good enough for her. Wouldn't surprise me nary grain if she didn't wheedle old Granny Tomlin herself into puttin' off her breakfast shawl that the pore old critter's been wearin'

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round her shoulders every year, from the very first day the snow flies twell the robin comes a-hoppin' and a-chirpin' in the spring time."

When Granny Tomlin was a young girl she didn't wear her shoes every day. She held back. And when it was a new pair she carried them all the way to church, to keep them new and unscuffed, and sat down under a tree when she got within sight of the church house and put them on. Dusted off the toes by rubbing them first on one stockinged leg, then the other. Goodness, Granny Tomlin could recollect the same as if 'twas yesterday, her youthful days and the people she had known then.

"Wimmin in my day," she observed, "were a friendly turn. We'd quilt together, pick wool, and pull flax together. Helped each other at butcherin' time, sorghum makin', at corn cuttin'. We'd all pitch in at any task and help each other out. We didn't give out like folks do now. Kept right on goin' with our work and many's the time when we'd all put in the day with the hundred and one things there are to do at butcherin', we pitched in, cleared up the mess, and old Clink Turley come along with his fiddle and, bless you, we danced all night. Healthy and strong, folks were in my young day, and neighborly. And we had a knowin' of how to use whatever was at hand; made rugs out of corn shucks and to make a sieve we taken a hoop of white oak and stretched over it a piece of bleach and we shook the bran out of the flour that way. We putt coffee in a vessel and beat it with a hammer if we lacked a handmill on the wall to grind it in. Folks was crafty and had plenty of mother wit in my day."

For a while the old woman jolted to and fro in her chair, puffing her little clay pipe. When she spoke again it was

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slowly, cautiously, as if to make sure of choosing the right words. "It's not that folks ain't a friendly turn today. They are! Leastwise some I know—not callin' no names."

Mountain folk are often scornful of "new-fangled ways." "A body darsen get above their raisin', sendin' off to the level land for liniment and bitters for ailments," Aunt Linthie Thacker maintains. "A fidity bag around a youngin's neck is a heap surer to keep off deezize and croup than all them new-fangled ways putt together. Louarkie!" she admonishes her young kinswoman, "putt that fidity bag around little Ero's neck and keep it thar till he quits wheezin'." Little Ero's protest against the foul-smelling asafetida is futile. His mother places the small lump of gum in a rag and with a string torn from her worn apron, if no other is at hand, ties it around the neck of the young sufferer. He wears it day and night.

And again the old woman calls out, "Mind you, Louarkie! You send straightway for Little Bill Bob Nethercutt—him that never set eyes on his own pappy on account Little Bill Bob bein' bornt all of three month after Big Bill Bob were laid a corpse in his grave. That youngin can stop the mouth rash of your baby child, I tell ye! All he's got to do is to blow his breath in the mouth of the leetle sufferin' babe. The thrash has got to git when the likes of Little Bill Bob Nethercutt blows in the mouth of the slobberin', sufferin' babe."

And forthwith the trusting young mother, not taking time to send for Little Bill Bob, took her babe in arms and hurried along the footpath over the mountain to the hearth of young widder Nethercutt, wishing every step of the way, you may be sure, for the thrash to be cured. And there with the babe she sat until Little Bill Bob stepped

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up to the baby and looked curiously at it until it opened wide its flaming little lips. Bill Bob blew his breath into the baby's mouth with all his might. From that day on, the young mother and Aunt Linthie will tell you, the rash left the baby's mouth and never did come back.

"Now if a child is peevish and suffers no end from ear ache," Aunt Alice on Troublesome Creek told me one day, "and there's an old granny woman handy puffin' her pipe, let her blow smoke in the leetle uns ear. That will ease the misery. But there's another cure, and a heap more lasty." Then Aunt Alice goes to the door of her cabin and brings in a bottle that has been hanging on the outside wall, a bottle filled with mullein bloom.

"You pick the bloom in the summer month. And make sure," she added on second thought, "you hang your bottle where it gets the morning sun—not the evenin' sun. Along about blackberry time is best to pick the bloom, and don't putt too many in the bottle at one time. The sun draws the oil out of the bloom," she explained, as with a feather dipped into the bottle she dropped a few drops of the oil into the ear of the sufferer. "It's a good way to learn of healin' yarbs and all such," Aunt Alice says, "to let the least uns see for themselves how sartin is the cure."

## 4.

## WORK

WORK GOES ON IN A PRIMITIVE WAY ALONG THE lonely creeks and in the quiet hollows. There are daughters of Big Sandy who, like Lucretia, prefer to spin, and like Elizabeth prefer to wash at the battling block, make their own soap with wood ashes, and lye in the hopper, than to depend upon markets for income, and stores for their needs. They have neglected time-saving and labor-saving devices of this machine age, yet they have preserved a precious heritage, and a freedom from the economic ills of the machine age. They need no trained experts to advise them how to spend their spare time. In the philosophy of the mountain woman whose hours are crowded with toil, "tomorrow is another day that's not been teched." What is not finished today can wait until the morrow. There is no need of hurry, no breathless pursuit of this engagement and that. Women folk in the Big Sandy country still have time to be neighborly, to take the day to visit and relax.

Men folk share each other's work and fun, and hand down to their sons the ways of their elders. Both in play and work they vie with one another to excel. They put their strength to all sorts of tests; who can chop the fastest, who can fell the most trees in a given time; who can lift

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the heaviest load; who is cleverest in pitching horseshoes. Mountain men are resourceful and able to earn a living in more ways than one. Almost all of them do some farming, and raise some livestock. They are clever carpenters, and skillful, if elementary, engineers, and work, when they can get it, on roads, bridges, buildings, and in lumber camps. Many of them dig a little coal from a pit on their own farms. The men of Big Sandy have inherited traits of making use of everything at hand. They utilize tanbark, which they ship down the river to tanneries, sawdust, which is packed between the plank walls of their own ice houses or used for refrigerator cars; even the dry leaves of the tree make warm bedding for hogs. Short pieces of wood are cut to keg lengths and barrel lengths and shipped to the mill towns down the river for nail kegs and flour barrels; spoke and hub factories, too, down in the mill towns, get their supply from the Big Sandy country.

They are an ingenious and self-reliant people, capable of long hours of work which they find less irksome than that of the paid day laborer, for they are independent. Whatever they do is upon their own ground and for themselves. They are not toiling under set rules, they punch no time clock, they are not clouding their minds with speculation on overtime nor is theirs the hazard of being late, docked, or fired. They are spared the anxiety of competition. The earth is theirs! It will yield the fruits of their labor. They do not have to depend upon canned food, canned music, or canned sermons. All these things are theirs, free as Salvation, if they but utilize the things at hand. And most of them do.

Co-operative work, so essential in the old frontier days, is still the custom. A week or two before the event, the

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word is spread around. "Bunyan's son is going to be married. Bunyan has give out the word of their house raising." Bunyan, the father, has given his son the logs with which to make his house, and a "house seat," a level piece of land on which to put the stone foundation. It is the way of the son to settle on the same creek where his father before him has settled, a little farther up.

The neighbors will even take time "out of the crop" if necessary to help raise the house. I have seen a log house, one room with a lean-to kitchen, of freshly cut, unseasoned planks, chimney and all, completed in one day's time, so that by the time the infare, which lasts three days, is over, the happy couple start life under their own roof. And as the seasons roll around they follow the same pursuits that have gone on with their neighbors year after year.

Another communal activity is corn shucking, in the autumn, with all the fun that goes with it: the watchful lad with his eye peeled for a red ear, so that he may kiss the blushing girl at his side; and when the husked ears have been tossed into barrel and bin, the floor of the barn is swept and Bunyan strikes up a tune on the fiddle and calls a "set." They dance till crack of dawn.

To this day sorghum makin' is an occasion when all hands join in. One autumn day when I was wandering through the country, nothing would do but that I go along with Jord and Analozie to watch the men makin' sorghum off on George's Creek.

"Mind the prankin' youngins!" Jord warned, "lest they tole you off to the skimmin' hole. Hit's aggreevatin' to sot foot in the gorm and hit sticks tighter'n a leech!" He cast about a searching eye. "Mind, Woman!" he grabbed my arm, "you all but sot foot in the hole!" At his warning I

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stepped around the skimming hole, carefully concealed under stalks of cane and dry leaves.

We looked on for a while as the boys and men fed the sugar cane to the mill, a portable affair and crudely built. It was mounted on two iron wheels and in this way hauled by its owner from place to place wherever there was a patch of cane. Cane growers paid for the use of the mill with cash money or with jugs of sorghum, as they were able, or as the owner chose. Often, during the process of sorghum makin', town folk journeying through the country stop to buy a jug or two of the thick syrup. The children stand about chewing the green sweet sticks of cane and dipping them into the boiling syrup. Just to be sociable I too dipped a cane stalk and made a poor pretense of relishing its sweetness. Even the babies were on hand, and the young daughters of the house. "Hit is lasty sweetnin'," said Jord, who was chewing with a relish. I agreed heartily, with inward reservations, for I had had my fill of sorghum long years ago when, on father's meager wages in a mill town, sorghum and biscuit had been our daily fare.

With a perforated tin spoon fastened to a long wood handle the sorghum maker skims the foam from the top of the boiling syrup and tosses it into the "skimmin' hole." There are some eight or ten pens in which the syrup boils until it reaches the proper stage. Starting as a juice almost colorless when it is squeezed from the cane stalks, as it reaches the boiling point in the first pans it begins to take on a light green shade, then passing from pan to pan it becomes a light golden brown. In the last stages, when it has become thick, it is a rich dark brown. It is run off into jugs, glass jars and even into deep tin lard cans containing several gallons.



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Sorghum molasses is indispensable on the table of mountain folk. It is delicious—if you like it—on corn bread or hot biscuit. It is good for mixing into gingerbread or cake and is an excellent substitute for jelly and preserves. I have often seen men, my own father among them, pour sorghum into a cup of coffee, and a goodly portion of thick sorghum over apple pie. It can be kept indefinitely and is just as welcome on the table in midsummer as in winter, spring and fall.

Sorghum is matchless for making taffy, and many a winter evening has been happily spent when the mother of the household puts on the big iron pot, fills it half way with sorghum, and boils it till it drops “jest right” from a spoon into a dipper of cold water. When it begins to harden at once when it reaches the water, she knows it has boiled long enough. Then it is poured out into plates, well-greased to keep it from sticking, and when cool enough to handle, the girls, having buttered or greased their hands, pull and pull until the golden brown turns to a snowy white. Then it is twisted into ropes and placed in coils and heart designs on buttered plates to harden. It is broken up into short pieces and passed around to everyone, and so a pleasant evening passes. Even in taffy pulling there is a spirit of friendly rivalry, all trying to pull their taffy the whitest or to coil it into the prettiest designs on the plate.

Now take apple-butter makin’ time. Buckleys give out the word there’ll be an apple peeling at their house on a Friday, and old and young gather to lend a helping hand. Even the children come to pack wood and corn cobs to keep the “kittle bilin’.” A great iron kettle it is, copper lined. Jethro and Lizzie wash the jars, and Little Eddie keeps the crocks filled with big apples as fast as the women

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peel and core and dump them into the kettle. And there is a game to lighten the work: this time it is Nancy Ellen Driffield, "her that Abe Mosby has been makin' eyes at ever since the play party at Kinsfords last corn-plantin' time," who tries her fortune by tossing an apple peel over her left shoulder to see if it will spell out the name of her own true love. Though the peel did not spell out the name on the first try, Nancy Ellen vowed it made the letter "A," or it would have if the briggity little youngins hadn't messed it up. So Aunt Ruthie, who had been stirring the kettle all of an hour, vowed Nancy Ellen "ort to have another chanct," and she did. Aunt Ruthie saw to that. She kept the briggity, prankin' youngins in their place and at a distance from the love-lorn Nancy, not by scolding, but by means of a plate of taffy, made the day before and put away on the cupboard shelf for this very occasion. On second trial Nancy Ellen, undisturbed, had much better luck. The apple peel, with a little help from Aunt Ruthie, sure enough spelled out the given name of the girl's true love. There it was on the ground where all could see, behind Nancy Ellen's chair.

By the middle of the afternoon Aunt Ruthie vowed she was tuckered out stirrin', so she passed the long-handled stirrer on to the eager hands of Sallie Tinsley. Whereupon the girls began to titter and sing:

Once around and twice in the middle,  
That's the way to stir an apple-butter kittle.

While they sang, that fisty Little Bill Ryder tried his level best to bump Sallie's elbow, so the stirrer would touch the side of the kettle. Brock Sturges, who had been seen whispering to Little Bill and pressing a penny into his hand,



*Frank Elam*

Sorghum makin'



*Frank Elam*

The sorghum mill

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was watching his chance to jump from behind the milk house and claim the forfeit, a kiss from Sallie's luscious lips. "Mind!" playfully cautioned Aunt Ruthie, "you darsen tech the side of the kittle with the stirrer, Sallie Tinsley! You know full well the forfeit!" All the rest knew too and they knew full well Sallie Tinsley was trying her level best to do that very thing. Many a long day Brock had yearned to kiss Sallie, nor did he wait in vain. Sallie did touch the stirrer against the kettle's side and amid the gay laughter and good-natured teasing of all the gathering, Brock claimed the forfeit, Sallie tittering and fluttering her eyelashes and squirming, to make out she was too surprised to squeal.

While the apple-butter making continued, Aunt Ruthie, who was like a cricket, never still a minute, hurried to look after the churning. "I nigh forgot," she declared, "that churn has been standin' yonder by the well shed better of two hour." At her heels followed Tinie Estep, always ready to help. Loved to win praise, did Tinie, for being willing. Soon as the yellow flecks of butter began to come, Tinie up with a mug of cold water from the well and poured in "a leetle at a time like Aunt Ruthie said," to make the flecks stick together, to wash them down into the churn through the small round opening in the wooden lid, through which the dasher moved at a lively clip in the sure hand of Aunt Ruthie.

By the time the butter had "come" and was made into a neat pat, with a rose impressed on the top by the carved wood mold, and placed in cellar house, someone who was stirring the apple butter called out: "Ready to jar!" The young girls had in the meantime washed and scalded the earthen jars that held a gallon each; made ready the tin

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lids, scoured clean as a hound's tooth with wood ashes; brought out the stick of red sealing wax. The jars were placed in a dishpan of hot water with a towel wrapped around them to keep the heat even. Then Aunt Ruthie, with the long-handled spoon, dipped out the reddish-brown apple butter into each, while other deft hands followed, putting on the lid, sealing it fast with melted wax. "By evening, long before milkin' time," Aunt Ruthie predicted, "they'll be cool enough to pack into cellar house and put on the shelves. And don't forget, Tinie, I want you should take home a jar to old Granny Estep, she's fretted so because she couldn't come help."

While they wisely rely on themselves as much as they can, and on "foreign markets" as little as possible, a cash crop, with a lively market, is as welcome in the Big Sandy country as elsewhere, and one of the best export crops is ginseng. Since the earliest settlements there have been "sang diggers." My earliest recollection of ginseng was seeing a heap of the dried roots piled high on the counter of my uncle's general store. The men and women from whom he bought for money, and "swapped store things" in exchange for, the medicinal root came from all over to trade with him. The virtues of the root were first discovered, and highly prized, in China; so great was the demand for it there, the plant was almost exterminated. When another variety was discovered in North America, it became, along with furs, one of the principal products exchanged for tea and silks in the days of the clipper ships.

Often I have seen patient old men and women and even little children, with a short-handled, eyed hoe, digging on mountainside and in deep ravine for precious ginseng roots. So great was the demand, the American variety is

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now rare in the wild state. The plant is now cultivated, but it is a difficult crop, since it takes three or four years to mature. It was only last year that I saw for the first time a "sang" plot, and Jasper, its owner, was pleased to let me take his likeness close by his unusual garden. He had made an arbor of willows, which he had cut down by the river, and covered it over with boughs so as to shade his crop, which grows well only in deep shade. And he stood over it with a long-barreled squirrel rifle, guard not against the ruthless hand of man, for mountain folk do not willfully destroy another's possessions, but to be on the lookout for the "varmint" that might steal down from the mountain-side and burrow under the roots and lay waste the "sang." That was Jasper's enemy. The old powder horn that he wore had served him, like his father before him, many a long year. "This eye hoe my grandsir fashioned his own self on the anvil yonder," Jasper indicated the rusty anvil under a near-by shed, "and he whittled his own hoe handles too. I reckon." Jasper reflected a second. "This hoe has wore out all of two score handles in its time."

A small hoe it was, no wider than a child's hand. There was a round eye in the middle through which the handle was thrust. Both ends of the blade were sharpened. The handle was about eighteen inches long. "Take you a good hand holt like this," Jasper showed me, "and honker down on the ground and dig out the roots. Sangin' is powerful wearisome on the back and hip j'int's ginst you dig all day."

On the ridge back of his house Jasper also showed me his row of "bee gums"—hollowed logs that once had been gum trees—set upon slabs of rock and each covered with

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a slab of stone he had brought from the creek bed. "A body takes two sticks this way," he crossed his fingers by way of explanation, "then you putt the sticks inside the hollered log; see them holes in the side where they're stickin' out? Well, the bees make their honeycomb on them sticks and we lift them out when they're filled." He had learned that art from his "elders" he told me.

"Colonel Jim" Hatcher, owner and manager of the Hatcher Hotel, in Pikeville, makes a hobby of collecting relics and tools of the Big Sandy country, and his hotel lobby is an amusing and amazing museum of the divers interests of its host. Here you may find in one corner a spinning wheel, a flax wheel, a broken bull-tongue plow; over there an ox yoke, a ponderous wood affair that bowed the stubborn heads of many an ox that plodded unbeaten mountain trails. In a glass case in another corner there's a faded homespun linsey-woolsey dress; elsewhere are Indian relics, a flint-lock gun of the days of the Revolution and no end of petrified curiosities. "Colonel Jim" takes a delight in showing visitors his collection, and giving them the benefit of his wisdom and information about the region.

"We had silk worms workin' for us hereabout when I was a boy, just like they worked for the Chinamen in twenty-six hundred B.C." He squints an eye toward the ceiling, enumerates with silent motion of the lips. "Let's see, that's about four thousand, five hundred and forty years ago." And when the amazed newcomer catches his breath at this startling observation, he goes on in his quiet way to tell how mountain folk carefully tended the "seed," as the eggs are called. "The female moth or butterfly lays from two hundred to five hundred bluish eggs, early in the



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spring. The eggs must be kept at an even temperature until the following spring. That's why we kept ours in a room of the house. Then, that next spring, the larvae begin to eat, after you put them on mulberry leaves or some other fit foliage. They eat till they just naturally bust out of their hides. Then they start eating all over again."

This process, Colonel Jim will tell you, is repeated "four times in six weeks. Then they start spinnin'! Yes, they spin with a vim. Think of it, from a creature no more than a fourth of an inch long to begin with, it spins during its next five days a double filament of silk from two thousand to three thousand feet long."

Then Colonel Jim proudly displays a pair of silk stockings which his own mother wore at her wedding, made from cocoons she cultivated herself. "Why, in my young day," he will tell you, "women made their own silk dresses. They raised their own silk worms and were a thrifty lot. They used cotton to keep the top of the stocking from stretching out of place. See that!" He points to the narrow cotton band knitted at the top of the faded pair of home-made silk stockings. "Cotton was once grown in plenty here, too, and it was used along with wool and silk for clothing. Kentucky could still produce silk if necessary," he declares. "These silk stockings, that my mother wore at her wedding, once they were the shade of old gold, but you see now they're faded from time to nearly a straw color. Judging from their weight I reckon as many as a half-dozen pairs of the sheer flimsy silk stockings women folk wear today could be produced from this heavy pair."

As a boy, he likes to recall, when his folks were raising silk worms, they placed them upon thickly leafed mulberry

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branches in a vacant room, through which he had to pass to his own bedroom. He says to this day the memory of the rustling sound made by the worms eating upon the mulberry leaves as he, a frightened little boy, hurried through the dark room, sends a shiver up his spine.

## 5.

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THE GREATEST WEALTH OF THE BIG SANDY HILLS waited a long time for its proper development. It was unnoticed, or ignored as of no value, in the early days when men came for furs, or hurried on toward the broad, flat, fertile lands to the west. Even the vast wealth of virgin timber was at first burned as a nuisance, and although outcroppings of coal may have been known, pools of oil discovered, and salt licks recognized as indicating salt mines in the vicinity, the use of these minerals was for a long time purely local, and the industry undeveloped, because the commerce of the nation was not yet ready for it.

In prehistoric times the Big Sandy district was once a subtropical forest, and it was then that the present beds of petroleum and coal were laid down. Later the region lay under an ocean, and great quantities of salt were deposited with the sediment, which became concentrated in certain places in almost pure salt beds. Salt mining was one of the early large-scale industries of the district; oil, natural gas, and coal, are now much more important.

One winter morning I sat in the dilapidated office of the county attorney in an isolated county seat of the Big Sandy country, typing a transcript of evidence in a land suit

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which was to be retried at the ensuing term of court. Looking up from my notebook at a sudden sound behind me, I saw a stalwart fellow in the doorway. His patched and faded breeches, bagging at the knees, were stuffed into high-topped boots. His ruddy complexion and startlingly white teeth seemed not at all to match the squinty eyes reduced to mere slits behind thick spectacles. His wide-brimmed felt rested low on a shock of reddish-brown hair. In the lapel of his coat was a tissue-paper nosegay, the fringed and gaily colored tissue used in those days for wrapping the sticks of white chewing gum to be found in a glass jar on the shelves of every country store. From the make-believe nosegay my eyes moved to the fellow's shoulder, for there rested a bulging, hide-covered trunk, bound around with a well-worn leather strap. He peered at me, then, tossing the trunk to the floor near the glowing pot-bellied stove, he doffed his dilapidated felt and bowed to me in princely fashion.

"Are you a typewriter?" he asked in his slow mountain way, pointing a short forefinger to my portable.

"I am sometimes called a—typewriter," I admitted, without the vestige of a smile. Being a court stenographer in the mountains of Kentucky soon teaches one self-control.

"Well, you are the woman the jedge fotched on, ain't you?" he asked, replacing his hat and wiping his face with a bedraggled bandana. "That is to say, you're the woman that sets down what a body testifies in court, and then when you have writ it off on that contrapshun you have yearned a wight o' sil'er?"

"That is how I earn my living," I answered, charmed

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with the quaint beauty of his speech, the music of his voice.

"That's what I wanted to git at," said he. "Now, Woman," squatting beside the trunk he unstrapped it and flung back the lid, "there's a passel of letters writ by some fellers out in the level land, and I allow to make answer. I warn't aimin' to go no fuder than this office here. Bein' as you swap the lawyer writin's for the use of the place" (news travels swiftly, I thought), "I 'lowed me and you could strike a deal. That is to say, iffen you're not too contrarious to put trust in a body's word for your hire till I git my draw from the county for keepin' school. Mought be we can get on." He looked earnestly at me. "I crave to set about the task," he concluded in his charming mountain fashion.

I flashed a look at the letter-filled trunk, then fixed a dubious eye upon the little tissue-paper nosegay in the faded coat lapel. "Poor fellow," I thought, "he's answered an ad in the old *Fireside Weekly*: 'Send us your name and receive big mail.' "

"It's not what you think," he said sternly. It was as if the fellow had read my very thoughts. He chuckled good naturedly. "These fellers have all writ me, do you appreciate that, Woman?" He crossed the room and stood beside my table, with thumbs hooked in his braided-bark galluses. "Now, if you're not afeared to confidence me and write some answers to the letters on this typewritin' contrapshun, so's they'll look fit and proper, I'll give you my note for your hire. And I'll take hit up 'twixt now and corn plantin'—not waitin' for the draw from my school. Speak your mind, Woman!" He stood with hands clasped behind him. The earnestness of his voice, his pride in

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wanting the letters "fit and proper," his eagerness to be at the task, brought my quick consent.

"Bring out the letters," I said, releasing from my portable the unfinished document on which I had been working, and without delay we proceeded to "make answer" that looked as "fit and proper" as painstaking efforts and a portable could make them. In a straightforward manner he replied to the inquiries of various individuals and companies interested in purchasing certain mineral rights and timber rights on lands upon which he had options.

When the work was finished, with the utmost care he drew up a note for one dollar and twenty-five cents, to cover my service for one month in answering letters to the "fellers out in the level land." Though I tried to assure him a note was unnecessary; I'd trust him; he would not have it that way. "A body's got to be businesslike," he declared, handing me the note which I tucked away in the pocket of my dress. After that he drew his chair closer to the table and proceeded painstakingly to sign the letters with the rusty, ink-crust-ed pen that lay on the table. When they were folded and sealed he tied the bundle with a strand of red yarn brought from the depths of his breeches pocket.

"I allus pack it along," said he. "Ricollect the story about the 'Bit of Whipcord' in the McGuffey Reader?" And without ado he proceeded to recite long passages from the lesson of "Waste Not, Want Not," and with growing enthusiasm proceeded to quote from Shakespeare, poems of Tennyson, of Lord Byron.

"A body that follers school teachin' like me takes delight in declaimin'," he offered half apologetically. "When I get started, 'pears like I don't know when to stop.

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Woman, do you appreciate," he leaned forward to confide, "when ma were a-livin' she were in hopes I'd get the callin' to preach, like Uncle Luke Burris off yonder on Forsaken; he's dead and gone these ten year or more." He paused reflectively. "He fit agin preachin', did Uncle Luke, same as I tried to fight agin this hure," he extended wide-spread palms toward the bundle of letters. "It's a callin'!" he declared earnestly, "just the same as preachin' the Word! And some day folks'll come into the light of what I'm aimin' to do. And them that confidence me will be a heap better off. Not in speerit, exactly, I don't mean to say," he hastened to explain, "though what I crave to do is not agin the Word. In no wise! It's not contrarious to the teachin' of Script're. Fact is, it's bound to bring satisfaction and comfort in a body's way of livin'."

Drawing nearer, he placed a mittened hand upon the rickety table and whispered confidently, "Woman, do you appreciate there's a giant a-sleepin' under these mountains? Been there for a thousand years, I reckon, though there's some that don't credit it, for all there's the sign! Streaked along the mountainside plain as the nose on a man's face. But I darsen name it to some, leastwise to the sheriff. He makes mock of my notions." For a moment he gazed steadily at his mud-covered boots, the patched breeches. His hands hung limply at his sides. "I've hear-ed his flouts and the taynts of the others, too, when I've passed along the road when I come here to the county seat," he said resignedly, "but a body has to lay under a heap when they've got a callin'! Uncle Luke did." The speaker's shoulders straightened. "I hear their flouts, but I just turn a deaf ear to their jibes, as if I didn't hear nary word. There's a fortune in coal in these hills, and it's ready, now,

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to be used." He sighed. "It's a satisfaction to speak a body's mind when there's a willin' ear."

He eyed me suspiciously, as if uncertain whether or not to confide further in me. Finally he did. "You see," he argued, "the way of it is this. I like to make on, to make believe that one of these days everything will turn out like I calculate. That we will dig out the treasures under this yearth, right here under these mountains. There is a giant a-sleepin', a giant made of coal! And one of these days, ginst I get them folks out in the level land satisfied of it, them that writ the letters, they'll come here with cash money to help me open up these mountainsides and turn that giant free! We'll live to see the day—you and me." Pocketing the yarn-bound letters, he pulled on his mittens, shouldered the hide-covered trunk, and stalked out.

Scarcely had the strange visitor gone than the sheriff came swaggering in. Chuckling, he tapped a finger to forehead, glancing back over his shoulder. "He's quare. Some say he's crazy as a March hare. Some call him King Coal!" the sheriff guffawed loudly. "King Coal! fancy that!" He held his sides and guffawed the louder. "Come to think of it, he's brought it on his own self. Rovin' over these mountains and peerin' at the yearth, scratchin' at it with pick or maddox, whatever he can lay hands to. Mumblin' to hisself in his scatter-brained fashion about a giant that's sleepin' under these mountains. Daffy John! That's the name he wears mostly around here, though the judge and some of the lawyers call him big soundin' names—"The Man of Vision!" and 'John the Teacher!' and such as that," the sheriff scoffed. "But as far as I'm able to see the name of Daffy John fits him p'int blank!"

I did not trust the sheriff too much, for he belonged to



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that most loathsome category in the sight of the mountain folk: to them he was a "hill billy." His job had gone to his head, what with a few trips in the exercise of his official duties to the state capital, and other sojourns in big cities to bring back offenders of the law who had "escaped beyond the bounds of the commonwealth" as he boastfully put it. Indeed, the sheriff took delight in pokin' fun at his own people, the mountain people, delighted in holding them up to ridicule. That made him an out-and-out hill billy. But I was interested in my recent visitor, so I let the sheriff talk. Perhaps I led him on a bit.

"Daffy John takes every solitary dollar he draws from the county for teachin' school and puts it on land options. Quare notion, too, he's got, o' packin' that old valise around on his back. If he's bound to pack somethin' he'd ort to get hisself a new leather telescope." The sheriff meant a brief case. "If he had a grain o' wits he'd buy hisself some fitten wearin' clothes too, 'stead of goin' around lookin' like a scarecrow in patches and plaited-bark gal-luses." The sheriff took occasion to fling back his coat and thumb his red suspenders with glistening buckles, making sure, as he did so, that the finger with the huge red set ring was crooked just so. "Fact is, he'd better watch his step. Sarie Fraley says to me, jest t'other day, 'Sheriff,' says she, 'Sheriff, I don't want to pack no tales, but I seen Daffy John stop old Tizzie Cardwell on the road t'other day and the pore old critter jest rubbed her hands one round t'other and sobbed somethin' pitiful, sayin', 'I'll do what I kin, John. I'll try.' 'Sheriff,' says Sarie, 'do you appreciate that Daffy John was skeerin' that old woman into lettin' him have a option on her land? He'd ort to be took off,' says Sarie, and I agree with her."

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Sometimes, I came to learn, the sheriff even went beyond scoffing, and was openly antagonistic.

"Daffy John'll get an option on your land," he told some mountain people, "and first thing you know he will sell you out to them sharp city fellers he's writin' letters to. Claims he's goin' to make you rich, does he? Fiddlesticks! He'll do well if he don't end up a charge on the commonwealth his own self, in the county poorhouse, or state lunatic asylum!"

One day after I had finished writing a number of options for Daffy John, he sat for a while talking of things that had happened on Lonesome, of commonplace events on Forsaken, and the doings of this one and that one out on Peevish, and Possum Trot, on Levisa and far-off Brushy. He talked of his plans for the future.

"Like I were sayin'," he had a way of beginning abruptly after a silence, "nigh everybody has a callin' for one thing or another. And no matter what a body does there are some who ever doubt their intent." He gazed reflectively toward the hills. "Like the sheriff and Sarie Fraley. I reckon," he added philosophically, gathering up his belongings and shouldering the hide-covered trunk, "there'll always be a doubtin' Thomas on this yearth! I vow, iffen the good Lord Hissself was to set foot in these mountains of Kentucky, the sheriff would pick a flaw with Him and throw out flouts against Him! That's the sheriff's callin'. We've got to bear with one another in this world if—" He stopped abruptly as the sheriff swaggered into the room.

"We've got to bear, I reckon," he snickered, "with that giant that's sleepin' under the mountains. Nohow, John, giant or no giant, I've got a warrant for you!" He produced a paper from an inside coat pocket. "Mistress Tizzie Card-

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well appears to have cause for complaint. She seems to be reasonably sure you are removing, without her knowledge or consent, quantities of coal from her land, certain parts, mebbe, on which you've not got a lease. Fact is, John, Tizzie Cardwell charges you with theft!"

"Theft!" The bespectacled teacher gasped. The hide-covered trunk fell from his shoulder.

"Pick up your contrapshuns!" commanded the sheriff authoritatively. "You best come peaceable. . . ."

As the date of the trial drew near, gossip ran high. "Sarie Fraley's up to her old tricks. Sarie's been talkin' to Tizzie, to my notion," some argued. "No knowin'," others countered. "Could be, John's tryin' to get the best of old Tizzie, cheatin' her maybe. Can't always tell." There were those who were eager to suspicion "The Man of Vision."

At length the case got under way, with two of the county's most promising lawyers engaged by the teacher; the judge being replaced, because of his avowed friendliness for the defendant, by a special jurist from another circuit to sit on the case.

Plaintiff's counsel was belligerent from the outset. "You have removed coal from a certain portion of the land of Mistress Tizzie Cardwell without making an accounting therefor to her," prodded Tizzie's lawyer, kinsman of the sheriff.

"I have a lease—" began the teacher on the witness stand.

"That's conceded!" snapped the lawyer. "You have a lease for a certain portion of the land, but you have made no accounting for coal removed. Is that not the fact?"

"It takes time to make an accurate accounting," replied

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the teacher nervously, "but it is my intent to make fitten and proper accounting—"

"You'll oblige the court by making direct answer!" thundered the special judge.

"Haven't you on several occasions met the plaintiff, Mistress Tizzie Cardwell, an aged woman, as you gentlemen of the jury see," plaintiff's counsel flung an impressive hand toward Tizzie, quaking in her seat on the front bench. "Have you not—answer yes or no," thundered the lawyer—"met this plaintiff on the road and threatened her?"

"I have not!"

"Did you not, on the night of Friday of last week, go to the home of one Mistress Sarie Fraley, in the absence of her husband—" the lawyer paused, watching the effect of his words on the defendant and the jury, "—in the absence of her husband," he repeated carefully, "and attempt to coerce—"

"I never in my life set foot in Sarie Fraley's house. Never!" cried the amazed teacher, his face bloodless.

"I'll put it this way, then," the sheriff's kinsman glowered at the defendant. "Did you not, on Friday of last week, come to the door of one Sarie Fraley and standing there on the stoop attempt to coerce and intimidate the said Sarie Fraley, avowed friend of the aged plaintiff here, with regard to the trial of this case?"

Again John answered firmly in the negative.

Plaintiff's counsel continued to "put it this way," and to "state the question another way," with all sorts of insinuating inflections in his voice. The trial went on for several days, with new witnesses being introduced from time to time, whispered bickerings between the old

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woman's lawyer and defendant's counsel, murmured suggestions of compromise. But Daffy John would have none of it. "I'll fight this thing to a finish," I heard him say to his lawyers, "though I've not a dollar in my pocket. It takes all I can lay hands on to pay the miners. But if you'll take my note," he pleaded, "I'll make it good in time. I just can't stop the work of gettin' out coal now. Don't you see I'm bound to make a showin' to the prospectors? If I'm blocked in my work now, it will plumb ruin everything. If my creditors will just bear with me it's bound to come out right. And I darsen compromise and plumb ruin all the future!"

After a ten days' trial, the court was satisfied with John's accounting, but by the time the next term of court rolled around, old Tizzie Cardwell's wasn't the only law suit against him. Law suits continued to multiply with the increased output of coal. At that time he had removed only wagonloads at a few openings of seams. Despite the law suits he kept resolutely to his course, even though his lawyers advised that he quit fooling with the undertaking. They pointed out to him the cost of the increasing litigation, the ill feeling among the people on whose land he held option. It would take capital and a lot of it to develop a mine worth while, they declared. Still he persisted.

One afternoon, at the close of another wearisome day in court, seated in the office where he had been dictating more letters to the prospectors, he remarked in his quiet way: "Woman, I've been studyin'. Seems like if a body remains an earthworm, no one takes notice of him, but the minute he dares lift his head, then something happens. Them that don't understand a body's intent and don't want to see his aim, they begin to put all sorts of stumblin'

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blocks in the way." He straightened his shoulders. "But come what will, I don't aim to give up!" For a long time he pondered in silence while I continued to type letters to "the fellers out in the level land." Presently he looked up. "I've got an idee! If I can get a loan from some of them men out yonder, without lettin' loose of the control of my options and leases, I could get me some diggin' machinery. Diggin' machinery that would beat this here pick-and-shovel business all holler! If I could get as much as two thousand dollars, I could make a sure-enough start."

But even his good friend, the judge, though he felt certain there was a future to coal mining on the teacher's options, advised him not to "bite off more than he could chew." "Money's scarce," counseled his honor, "and two thousand dollars is a lot of money for you to hazard on an undertaking. Besides, you've got all these law suits against you, and your notes out to this one and that. And remember, the prospectors you've been dickering with could step in and swallow you up."

However, that very day, John dictated letter after letter appealing for loans. As the months went by he kept patiently at his task, with now and then a small advance from the men out in the level land. It strained not only his patience, but his physical endurance, to manipulate the advances, small though they were, to the best advantage, and at the same time not surrender his options either to the "city fellers," or turn them back to those suing him first on one charge and then another. His clothes became shabbier as time went on. Even so, every dollar he earned from teaching went to another option and yet another on mineral rights of land, the surface of which, hilly and rug-

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ged in many instances, could produce no more than a straggling corn patch.

The judge grew impatient with the "foolhardy carryings on" of the teacher and told him as much. "You'll come to downright want, John," he argued. "Give up this pursuit. It is not that I don't agree with you that there is a fortune in mineral there under the mountains, but, my friend, it's just a bigger job than you, one man, ought to tackle. My good friend," the judge reasoned earnestly, "you could earn a comfortable living in some other field. You might even run for county superintendent of schools. You like educational work." John's look said louder than words, "You too, losing faith in me!" After that the subject was rarely mentioned between them, but John plodded on.

The judge declared he could not conscientiously be a party to seeing his friend go headlong to ruin and disappointment. "Though there is no doubt the giant is sleeping under these mountains, it takes money and lots of it to realize a vision!" His honor thereupon reiterated for the hundredth time the story of his friend, down in the Blue Grass, who rose from struggling clerk to the Supreme Court bench. We all knew that story of hardship and heartbreak. "But it took money and pull. My friend of the Blue Grass was still paying off notes and obligations at the time of his death—and he lived to be eighty-nine! I'd not want to see our teacher travel that same thorny path. Sometimes I blame myself for ever having encouraged him. I should not have called him a man of vision." The judge's troubled eyes followed the retreating figure, far down the road, bearing the hide-covered trunk on stooped shoulder, the ragged figure trudging the road that

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led to the post office and on to Lonesome Creek. "Poor fellow, he will lose the pittance he's earned at school teaching. He has put the last dollar of it on options. Going about in patches—it's a shame. Denying himself even the meager comforts of life."

Law suits, by those who had given leases, increased against him with each term of court. Despite them and the expense incurred, the ever-growing number of notes he was forced to make again and again to tide himself over, and above all regardless of the scoffs and jeers of the critical, he kept on. Sometimes when he dropped in at the office to answer letters, when the work was over he would get to talking. Talking more to himself, probably, than to me seated at the typewriter. He'd bring up things of the past history of the Big Sandy, speak of its salt mines, and of the first time prospectors struck petroleum. "Back in eighteen sixty-five, it was. Diggin' for one thing, found another. That's how it goes. A man can set out to look for something, and if he sticks at it long enough he will find what he's lookin' for and more too." He seemed to be arguing the point with an unseen group of listeners. "Yes, siree, back in eighteen eighty-seven there were wise heads that predicted there was enough gas, naterl gas, in this Big Sandy country, if they put it to use, to run all the machinery that was set up between Catlettsburg and Louisville, with Cincinnati throwed into the bargain." Suddenly he'd seem to be aware of my presence and would turn with a startled expression. "There are some like the men who dwelt on this yearth when the Saviour was amongst them, who wouldn't believe facts that stared them in the face. With many a one, seeing is not believ-



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ing! But the day will come," he'd conclude with a vim, "when the scales will fall off their eyes." And the next moment, like a care-free boy, he would take his homemade recorder, the reed whistle, from his pocket, and play a gay hornpipe, or a jig tune from the days of Good Queen Bess. . . .

As the years went by, the letters Daffy John sent forth to the "fellers out in the level land" had their effect. As his enterprise grew and began to profit, it became easier to attract capital, and law suits diminished in number. Eventually Daffy John had built his own railroad spur to carry out his fortune in coal. He died a multimillionaire and many people in the Big Sandy country realized comforts and joys undreamed of, through his vision—and their holdings in coal! And many a one, the good judge himself among them, was impelled to say, "he knew what he was about." To his dying day, it is said, Daffy John clung to the "quare" notion of lugging the old hide-covered trunk with him, even when he took a suite in a palatial hostelry in New York, where he often went to consult with capitalists. To him the old trunk was a treasured reminder of the struggles of the past, and of a vision realized.

Once, so the story goes, when he wished to negotiate a gigantic deal involving a fortune in money, he determined to impress the capitalists whom he meant to approach. He chartered a private train that bore him from the Big Sandy's mouth to the metropolis. There he had himself rigged out in the smartest attire a tailor could conceive, high silk hat, spats, shining patent leather shoes, and all. Carrying a silver-headed cane and smoking a cigar—the best in the market—he strode into the imposing offices of

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the capitalist. Flicking the ash from his gold-banded cigar, he casually dropped a comment about his private train on which he had come to town. The capitalist's eyes flickered. "But just oncet!" John told afterward.

"Fellers, that shiny hat, and the shiny-headed cane, and the private train, to say nothing of the vittals I put before him and the rest on that train, standin' on the siding—that done the trick! Well, we ett till we nigh busted ourselves. But I was in so much misery before we got through in that plague-taked starched white shirt I couldn't stand it no longer. I snuck off in one end of the car and stripped and come back to the table in my own wearin' clothes, my patched breeches and my muddy boots. But, men, ginst then I had all the papers signed up and in my hip pocket. Then we all pitched in and ett some more. One of the men, he even ett some sorghum I took along. He whiffed the corn-cob stopper and just naturally covered his plate with them molasses. No, sir, men, I never put a drap of corn whiskey before 'em. I was afear-ed they couldn't stand it. Nohow, you can get a heap more with sweetnin' than you can with sour mash." He'd chuckle to himself. "They didn't know what a slippery log I was walkin'. Bless you, I had blanketed every thing I had in the world to get the money to hire that private train. But it worked! Would you believe it, we ended up that night on the private train with as fine a play party and frolic as ever you saw. Them men were plumb pleased, like boys at a frolic. I played my sassafras whistle and I sung 'em a ditty:

Get along down, down Big Sandy  
Get along down Big Sandy, boys  
That's the place for you—

## DAFFY JOHN

They favored it, no end. I had to sing it plumb through. And then the old feller, the one I went to see first in his fine big office, he had as sorry a countenance as I ever looked on when first I went in that day to talk about the deal. Well, before I got through singin' that ditty he was laughin' as hearty and was spry as old Grandpa Boggs when the Widder Stratton said she'd marry him. A old man, he was, with one foot in the grave, you might say. Well, sir, he up and stepped a hornpipe as spry as a boy in his teens, after I'd sung the ditty. Seemed like before that, the poor feller had been packin' the cares of the world on his countenance and on his shoulders. But the frolic and them sorghum molasses and the ditties I sung and the hornpipe I played on my whistle all put together just naturally put that old man in good heart. Chipper, he was, as a jay bird on a fence rail in the springtime." When John casually mentioned the man's name the judge slumped in his chair, for he was none other than a Wall Street magnate whose yes or no made fortunes or wiped them out.

Whereas in its early stages of development, Big Sandy shipped out its coal in small cars and on flatboats, for the past quarter century it has gone forth in cars of from fifty to a thousand tons capacity, upon barges of from one to three thousand tons. Today, with electrified mines, buggies operated by that power, modern mining machinery, power houses, and gigantic coal tipples, the Big Sandy mines produce in one day's time a tonnage equal to a whole year's production before primitive methods and back-breaking manual labor gave way to the inventions of the machine age, adding up now to an annual output of over thirty million tons. Which would seem fair proof of

## DAFFY JOHN

the geologist's statement: "Here in the Big Sandy country lies the nation's richest individual storehouse of fuel energy."

All this the Man of Vision must have foreseen, even though he was not always articulate.

# 6.

## MININ' INDEPENDENT

**C**OAL MINING IS NOW THE MAJOR INDUSTRY OF THE Big Sandy country. There are a number of companies which conduct extensive operations; with elaborate machinery they bring out millions of tons of bituminous coal each year, and mile-long trains of loaded cars wind round the sharp curves along the banks of Big Sandy each day, their rumbling wheels echoing through the hills as they carry their freight to centers of industry, east, north and west.

Because the district is rich in coal, with numerous outcroppings, there are also many private mining enterprises, small mines operated by a single man, or by father and son. Sometimes they serve merely to provide fuel for the domestic stove, sometimes they sell truckloads to the neighborhood. In some cases they are mere holes in the hills, which would be dangerous were they not so small, but in other cases one-man coal mines are miniatures of the elaborate company mines, with roofs shored with timbers, narrow-gauge railways with little hand-drawn trucks to carry the coal to the pit, and some even have a coal elevator and scales, for loading. I visited one where the son does all the digging with pick and shovel, and his father weighs and sells the coal to neighbors. The strong timbers which reinforce the drift mouth of the mine were felled with their own axes by grandfather, father and son, and the crude

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buggy to carry out the coal they also made and keep in repair.

Uncle Tom, as the father is known, and Stephen, the son, leave home long before daylight, taking along their dinner in a tin bucket. There is a big raw onion cut into quarters, thick pieces of corn bread, boiled white beans in a cup inside the bucket, jelly or preserves in a glass. Coffee would be cold by the time they reached the mine, therefore they make it hot in a tin coffee pot on the little iron stove which is perched up on stones in the shack at the pit.

"Of late it's got so I have to stay here all night," Uncle Tom told me, "so I've fixed me up a bunk. The old woman [his wife] let me have some kivvers and a piller and a coupla old quilts. It's dirty around the bank so I wouldn't fetch her best beddin' here to this place. How come it I have to keep watch here of a night time is—" he hesitated, looking off down the road, now this way, now that, "—there's a heap o' thievin' goin' on, Woman. Would you believe it, a feller was ketched backin' up a truck right here at the drift mouth where I'd dumped a buggy or two of coal. He shoveled it up and drove off into the night with it. It's them blasted vehicles that's run without a nag that's causin' destruction in this country. With such as that a man can be here one minute, gone the next! Does his meanness and thievin' and he can be gone before you know it. Time was when a man could leave his stuff layin' out loose. No one ever thought of botherin' it—shovel, sledge, pick, buggy, even a box of squibs that we use for blastin' out a seam. But now everything has to be put under lock and key." He hastened to add, "But it's not our people that does the thievin' and pilferin'." Uncle Tom

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was most emphatic. "Our own people pay one way or the other for every bushel of coal they get from me. Big Sandy folks and mountain men anywhere in Kentucky are just nat'erly honest. The thievin' and pilferin' is done by strangers!" The old man's eyes narrowed behind thick-lensed spectacles. "Strangers that come from down yonder in the mill towns, that have trucks and dollars to where we've got only coppers. And they're re'chin' out their greedy hands to take from us."

It was on the tip of my tongue to ask why he didn't take his grievance to a court of law, when he said resignedly, "You darsen call the law on such scalawags. They'd serve me like they did Mose Taulbee over on Bear Creek." He went on to tell this story. "They'd been workin' the road over there—got it so you could get all the way to the bank—could back a vehicle right up to the entry." Uncle Tom shook his head disapprovingly. "Got things too handy. Well, every morning, Mose would come to the bank, he'd notice the coal pile looked a heap less than the way he'd left it the night before. At first he thought he could be mistaken, but it went on to where Mose made some markin's with stakes drove into the ground and covered 'em over with some big lumps of coal. Next day he come to the bank—sure enough, the big lumps, and more too, had been stole away. He breshed off the fine coal dust and saw his markin's and calculated how much had been stole. He was mad as a hornet! That evenin' when he quit for the day he found him a clapboard and marked on it with a charred stick and nailed it up on his shack:

WARNING! QUIT YOUR THIEVING!

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"That's how the sign read. Well, the next mornin', Mose Taulbee come to the bank, the shack was burned to the ground, scales and all, and there wasn't nary lump of coal left outside the bank. A still tongue," observed Uncle Tom, "makes a wise head. From then on, since that happened to Mose Taulbee at his coal bank, I've been sleepin' here in my bunk so's to keep vigil on what's mine."

He looked down the road. "It's not our people," he repeated, "that does the thievin'. It's them smart alecs, them hill billies down near the mill towns. Think theirselves above work, want to take off of others. Now look comin' yonder, see that little feller pullin' that wagon he made hisself. He's Widder Hatton's boy, Lemuel. Proud as a king. Wouldn't take a crumb that wasn't his'n."

In a tattered shirt, and breeches that reached to his bare feet, Lemuel, scarcely seven, trudged up the road, laboriously dragging behind him a crude little wagon on wabbling iron wheels. His shock of reddish-brown hair stuck out through a hole in the top of a battered hat. He stopped now and then to hitch up his galluses, made fast with a nail to his breeches. In one hand he carried a tin lard bucket.

"Uncle Tom," he greeted, the moment he halted his small, ramshackle wagon beside the shack, "ma's wantin' a bushel o' coal—she's not a copper to her name—because Liz Kazee that's bedfast with her tenth youngin didn't pay ma for tendin' her and doin' her washin'. But here," the grimy little hand extended the bucket, "ma sent you these soup beans right off the stove and"—the child's eyes looked earnestly up to the man's—"ma putt in the sow belly she cooked 'em in!"



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"Now, Lemuel," Uncle Tom was embarrassed at the widow's generosity, "your ma needn't a-done that. A growin' man like you, he needs to eat fat meat so's to make him grow. I'll swap you coal for soup beans, I ever crave soup beans, but I'm wantin' you to take the sow belly back with you."

With great care Uncle Tom measured out some firm lumps into a bushel basket from the pile beside the shack and poured them into the boy's wagon. And having emptied out the beans into an iron pot on the stove Uncle Tom returned the bucket to the boy. "I left the meat in there," he explained.

"You're too free hearted, Uncle Tom," said the boy, never once offering to lift the lid to peek in and make sure of the fat meat, "and you're gettin' old; you'd ort not be so ready to give away." The little fellow shifted a marble-like cud from one cheek to the other and thumbed his galluses. "You'd ort to a kept the sow belly."

"Tut-tut!" Uncle Tom silenced the words of praise. "Lemuel, I'm wantin' you to grow off fast. One of these days you can take my boy's place here at the bank. The way he's diggin' in the bank every day, Stephen's breakin' fast. We'll be wantin' you to take his place, ginst you grow up."

Small Lemuel grinned a wide, snaggle-toothed grin. "Hi, jeeminy!" he squirted a stream of amber from the side of his small mouth, "I can already take my chaw without pukin' up my vittals. Pa allus claimed, ginst a feller could do that, he's mought nigh a man!"

It was not until this point that small Lemuel offered to take notice of my presence, though he did not address me even now; rather, he spoke to Uncle Tom. "I 'lowed I'd

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wooden arm just outside the window of the shack, near the scales—his son Stephen emerged quickly from the bank, the small lamp on his miner's cap flickering feebly in the bright sunlight as he scurried along the hillside to the chute. He released the wood gate on the front of the chute by means of a rope, and the coal rumbled down into the wagon. Again Frew drove onto the platform of the scales and his load was weighed.

No one was in any hurry, so while Uncle Tom weighed the coal, Frew went back to talk a few minutes with Stephen. Down at the scales, Uncle Tom's lips moved with soundless words. Finally he called out to Frew: "Twenty bushel at twelve and a half cents a bushel comes to two fifty. Is that what you make it, Frew?"

"You ort to know, Uncle Tom," Frew chuckled, "long as you've been figgerin' coal in your head."

"Don't let him cheat you," Stephen called out loud enough for his father to hear, then disappeared within the dark yawning mouth of the coal bank.

"This is the best grade, Frew," Uncle Tom explained when his customer came back to the shack. "We could sell you that other you see there at six cents a bushel, but it's got a lot of slate and slag in it. You can burn every lump of this. Best grade of bituminous coal, or as good," he was careful of facts, "as any in the whole Big Sandy country. This soft coal can't be beat nowhere."

Frew reached into his breeches pocket, drew out a small poke, untied the string and counted out the silver. "I've got nothin' but hard money today—nary greenback among it. Been sellin' eggs for my woman; settin' eggs, and you know how wimmin folks are that I trade with; they never have anything but hard money. I reckon they keep the

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greenbacks hid away under the hearth till they can get to the county seat and bank 'em."

But already Uncle Tom's thoughts were away from greenbacks and coal. "Frew, do you reckon you could fetch me a settin' o' Plymouth Rocks? Someone was tellin' my old woman that she got the likes from you, a spell back."

"Yes, siree!" Frew beamed, "but I'd have to keep you waitin'. Not for long though. Molly's settin' eggs is all spoke for, this week, but if her hens keep up like they have the past month, I'd ort to have a settin' of Plymouth Rocks for you ginst today two weeks."

"What do you ask for a settin' o' Plymouth Rocks? The woman's got her heart on raisin' a batch o' biddies—gives her somethin' to tinker with—she's near past goin' with achin' in her j'int."

"Too bad," Frew sympathized. "Settin' hens will take her mind off her misery. Can let you have a settin', say, for thirty or thirty-five cents—"

"Here, then," Uncle Tom counted back the amount, "fetch me the settin' next time you come this way."

The one-man coal mine is a place of barter and trade and friendly gossip, where men of Big Sandy trust and are trusted. Frew was scarcely out of sight when a great truck came lumbering up to the mine.

"Hi, Pop!" The driver, in a gay sweater, cap over one eye, corduroys stuffed in high-topped laced boots, leaned over the wheel: "What you askin' for your black diamonds today?"

"Same as anyone else that's minin' independent," Uncle Tom answered promptly. There wasn't the friendliness in his tone that had been there with Frew.

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"Your stuff's half slate!" scoffed the truck driver from the side of his mouth. "C'mon, now, none of your beefin'. What you askin'?"

"Six, or twelve and a half cents a bushel," Uncle Tom said quietly. "Which do you choose?"

"I don't want none of your slate," answered the truck driver and backed his truck onto the scales. "Give me the best—biggest lumps—cleanest you got!" There was command in the husky voice.

He jumped off the seat and peered over Uncle Tom's shoulder as he moved the scale weights to and fro on the beam. Then he climbed to the wheel again, and backed the truck around under the chute. Again Uncle Tom gave the signal on the rusty farm bell and Stephen came out of the bank. The truck was filled. While Uncle Tom was weighing the load, the driver watched over his shoulder, then fidgeted while Uncle Tom figured the price on his tablet.

"Well, don't be all day," he bellowed at last, by that time again at his place at the wheel. "I gotta step on it. How much, Pop?"

Uncle Tom told the amount. The truck driver fumbled in his pocket, with his free hand tossed down a crumpled bill. "There you are!" he called, stepped on the gas, and was off, leaving only a cloud of dust behind.

Uncle Tom stooped to pick up the crumpled greenback. "Two dollars!" he said as he unfolded it. "The scalawags do that now and then. But that's the risk a man has to take when he runs his own mine. Mostly people are honest, and a body has to take the bitter with the sweet in this world." His eyes followed the cloud of dust. "That scalawag will take that load and peddle it out to anyone

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that will buy it, in some of the factory towns down the river. The ones that buy it don't know and don't care where he got it—they don't ask no questions."

Presently two young lads came along with a wheelbarrow, paid for their load and went their way satisfied with their dealings, which included passing the time of day. After that a couple of young fellows came over the hill, one carrying an empty gunny sack over his shoulder.

"Howdy, Uncle Tom," they greeted in chorus, then the older of the two said, "Gimme a coupla bushel. We'll have to take whatever we can get today. We ain't had no work in our house for nearly four weeks."

Without hesitation Uncle Tom filled the measuring basket with choice lumps and emptied it into the gunny sack which the young fellows held open. Carefully they counted out the money, for the most part in pennies. They talked a while, then went their way, carrying the sack between them.

"The Ratliffs have seen a hard time. Poor management," Uncle Tom said sympathetically. "Sold their land outright. They're rentin' now, a little piece of land over the hill yonder. The old woman died soon after her man was buried, and young fellers don't seem to make on without old folks to *ad-vise* 'em. That's why I keep on here day after day, many a time when I don't feel spry a-tall, so's to learn Stephen all I can."

The old man squinted at the sun. "Woman, it won't be long till grub time," he said. "You best stay and eat a snack with me and Stephen." A playful smile lighted the wrinkled face. "Stephen don't have to be called to grub! He watches the shadder across the drift mouth. He learnt that from me, same as I learnt it from pa when he first

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taken me into the bank like I taken Stephen. When pa died I stepped into his boots, and so my son follers me with pick and shovel and buggy and chute."

While the coffee was boiling on the little iron stove, and the beans were being "het," Uncle Tom sat outside the shack talking of coal and of the Big Sandy country.

"If I had plow and team and such," he said, looking off at the valley below, "I sometimes fancy I'd like to farm. A man can make a good livin' at farmin' around here. Course I'd not be so choosey as to try to own bottom land. That sells all the way from a hundred to three hundred dollars a acre. Some of it is overflow land and some of it is high bottom land; high bottom land is more costly. A man can make a mighty fine crop on such land. But now take a place like Lon Tackett's—hill land and cove land—you can buy such as that for as little as ten dollars a acre up to thirty dollars a acre. And a man can raise corn and tobacco, potatoes and such, nearly as fine as on a bottom farm, if he works it right. Why, Lon, he's even got him a fine truck patch, and all told he owns just about twenty acre. Gets a good livin' off of it. Makes a pretty penny on his truck patch: beans, tomatoes, sweet corn, cucumbers, onions, beets. And his woman has more than she needs for their own table.

"If a man is willin', he can get on first rate with twenty acre, and his taxes don't amount to much. When I held deed to forty-two acre here in the Big Sandy country, my taxes only come to thirteen dollars and fourteen cents a year, and there was a dwellin' house on it. You understand, if it had been just plain land, no dwellin' house, the taxes would have been just about half that much.

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Then we cleared the top of the ridge, a strip as level as a floor about eight or nine hundred feet wide. We got a lot of good tie timber off of it—sold it to the railroad for crossties. They're allus havin' to repair their tracks. The railroad's just about three mile over the hill yonder. Some of the timber we sold to men who used it for mine posts. Several have opened their own mine around there in the hills on their own places. It is a living," he said matter-of-factly.

"Nearly any time a man can buy a small farm, say twenty or thirty acre, around hereabouts, if he wants to settle down and dig a livin', or raise it from the earth. Why, there's no better place in the world to live in." The faded eyes sparkled behind the thick lenses of the shiny rimmed spectacles. "The hills are high, the valleys are wide, there's bottom lands and cove lands, most any sort that a man would take a fancy to. And streams to fish in and woods to hunt in—rabbits, squirrels, 'possums, and quail. And a heap o' young fellers have no end of fun huntin' coons. Why, I know a man on Pigeon that keeps a full score of hounds for coon huntin'. Tends 'em and has his woman cookin' their grub same as if they were humans."

Again Uncle Tom's thoughts looped back to earth, to the coal mine. "I've roved these hills, pranked in my young day, say when I was thirteen, loved 'possum and coon and squirrel huntin'. But pa, he died and left ma with a houseful of children, so bein' the first born I had to pitch in and make a livin', or try to. I went into diggin' when I was just fourteen. But I'd watched pa and knowed the dangers and the warnin' signs in a coal bank. I ricollect when I started in at a bank of my own, on our place. That

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was the year me and Emmie were married. She was skeert to stay at the house by herself of a night—there was no road through here then and my first bank was way off up the holler—you just can see where them trees of heaven cast their shadders down over the old tumbled-in drift mouth, off there half way up the ridge. No roads then, just barely a cow path.

“Well, Emmie was a-feared to stay at home by herself of a nighttime, when I was in a big way of workin’—days weren’t long enough then. I went back to the bank after supper when the moon was in the full so’s I could see my way. A man had to be savin’ of lamp oil in them days. Nohow, Emmie would come along, packin’ her a gunny sack and a dry plank to sit on. For that bank was sorta damp—a treeclin’ stream from the side walls. She’d put her plank and gunny sack down in the bottom of the buggy and honker down and I’d shove the buggy into the bank. That’s when I first started diggin’—it wasn’t very high, you see. I was scrouged down on my side; couldn’t stand up, there wasn’t enough coal dug out yet; had to lay low on my side and dig with my pick as best I could. And her a little girl peerin’ over the top of the buggy, watchin’.

“One night a lump of wet clay fell on my lamp and put it out. Emmie started to whimper in the pitch dark. Vowed she heard crackin’ overhead, declared the bank was cavin’ in. Directly she screamed somethin’ awful. She vowed a varmint, a catamount, or a panther maybe was clawin’ in her hair. ‘Tut! Tut!’ I says, ‘nothin’s goin’ to harm you in here that couldn’t harm you outside the bank if it was a-mind to.’ She screeched the louder and fit with both hands. I couldn’t do a thing with her. I got



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so upset I was all thumbs. Like never to have found the leather poke around my neck where I kept my dry matches. Well, finally I got my lamp lighted again and there in the buggy lay Emmie, shiverin' and sobbin'. And a little dead bat with its little shriveled-up wings was there too. I never did ad-mit it to Emmie, but I was skeert too, what with her screechin' and sobbin'. I fancied some wild varmint tearin' her plumb to pieces.

"I never dug nary nuther lump of coal that night. And never again did I let my woman go into the bank with me. I'd allus hear-ed that it was bad luck to let a woman set foot in a coal bank." Uncle Tom's voice fell to a whisper. "They do say at a bank over on Forsaken you can hear the pitiful sobs of a woman comin' out of it, if you pass there of a winter's night. The story goes that a man that was jealous of his woman tolled her into the bank and strangled her to death. Some say she were jealous of him and follered him in. Nohow, whichever way it is, I do know no man has ever tried to work that mine. Young folks will take to their heels when darkness gathers round if they have to pass that old abandoned bank over on Forsaken Creek. Nohow, from that time when Emmie carried on like she did over a harmless little bat, I never taken her in the bank with me no more." Uncle Tom gulped sheepishly. "I never went back to the bank of a nighttime after that. Emmie allus said a man should work just from sun to sun, and I reckon Emmie was right."

The old man's thoughts traveled over the past. "She was spry on foot as a patridge in them days. Many a time we walked over that ridge and the next one to see her folks of a Sunday. She'd even race me the last mile. Eh, law,

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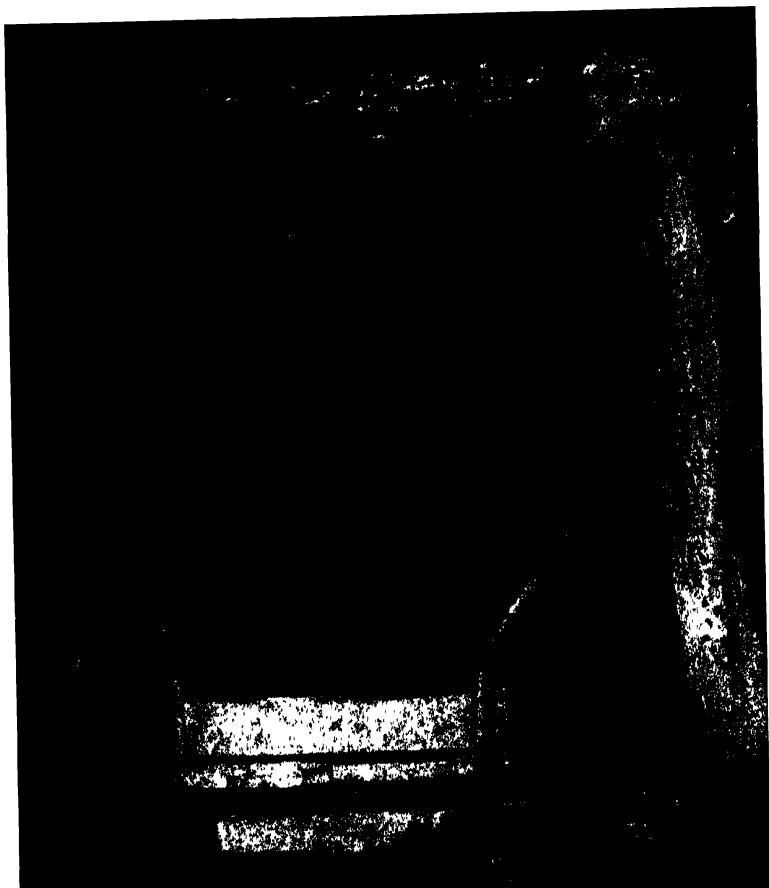
when a body gets on in years they have to forsake a heap of pleasures of this life. I'd druther to be in the bank yonder, where Stephen is, with my pick, 'stead of here, weighin' up. That was what pa used to say to me, and I didn't rightly understand it then. A body's got to live through things to rightly have a knowin' of their meanin'." He jumped to his feet. "I vow the coffee's burnin', and yonder comes Stephen out of the bank. I best hurry and set the table."

He placed knife, fork, and spoon at the head and one at each side of the table; over them he turned a plate upside down. There were three cracked cups, only one of which had a handle.

"You sit there," Uncle Tom invited graciously, pointing the place where the whole cup was. He sat at the head, his son opposite me. He also had given me a chair while they sat on boxes. Stephen, after greeting me, had stopped to wash his hands with yellow soap in the tin washpan on the back of the stove. He had washed around his mouth, leaving the rest of his face covered with coal grime, giving him a comical, black-face minstrel look. His cap with the miner's lamp was hung on a wall peg. He bowed his head and asked a blessing on "this nourishmint of our body, and Good Lord bless the stranger under our roof!" He waited with head uplifted, hands on knees until the father spoke.

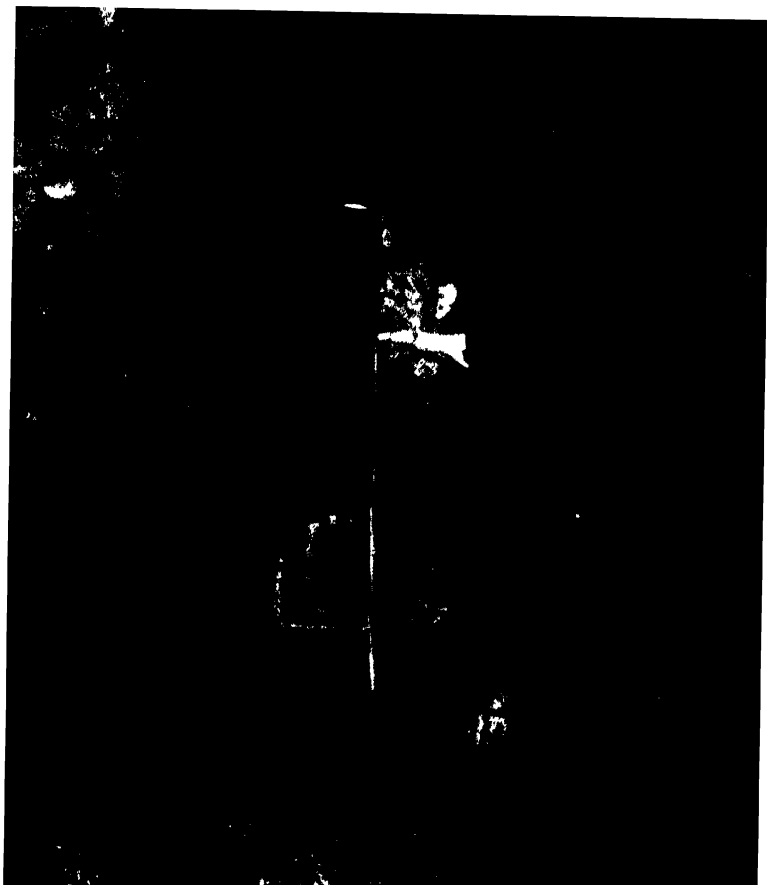
"Here," said Uncle Tom, "have some of the onions." He had quartered a big onion, placed it on a saucer with a spoonful of salt, and passed it to me. "Help yourself!" I did so and passed it over to Stephen.

"Now, here, let me bean you a piece of bread." On my plate beside the onion Uncle Tom placed a thick slice of



*Jacumski*

The drift mouth



Jacumski

Within the mine

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corn bread and over it spooned a good portion of beans from the iron pot.

Without the asking he also "beaned" a piece of bread for Stephen, who smacked his lips in delight after the first mouthful. He ate it with his tin spoon, for the beans were soupy, and soaked the bread until it was too soft to be eaten like a sandwich.

"Widder Hatton's cookin'," said Uncle Tom.

"I 'lowed as much." Stephen gulped another mouthful. The father reported the details of Little Lemuel's visit to his son.

"I reckon that hill billy in the yaller sweater got off without paying?" Stephen remarked.

Uncle Tom looked into his plate. "We'll have to quit sellin' to strangers," he mumbled. "Here, son." He took the lid off a jar of chopped green tomatoes. "Have some of the chowchow. Your ma allus puts a lot of green pepper, and cabbages, too, in her chowchow. It's mighty good eatin'." The old man heaped a spoonful on Stephen's plate and on mine. What with the hearty appetites of the two men, the table was quickly cleared—even the dish of cold boiled-in-jackets potatoes disappeared.

Stephen was jolting his box back from the table when he looked up at his father. "No fixins, pa?" he asked like a disappointed child.

"Why, yes," said Uncle Tom. "I near forgot. Get kinda flighty; not used to havin' company to eat with us here at the shack." From his box he reached to the stove, opened the oven door and brought out a pie. No, not one, but two, one stacked atop the other. "Dried-apple pie is the best eatin', nearly, a man could ask for, and there's no better hand at makin' such than your ma, Stephen." He set the

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battered pie pan on the end of the table and cut the thick, soggy crusts into quarters, placing a double slice on each of our plates. Stephen took the corn-cob stopper from a jug, turned its handle toward me. "Help yourself," he invited. "Would you like a little sweetnin' on your pie?"

But catching the whiff of sorghum, I passed the jug on to Uncle Tom, mumbling some excuse about already having more on my plate than I could eat. Uncle Tom poured a great thick heap of the cane molasses over his two layers of pie and the son did likewise.

Then came the coffee; thick and dark and bitter, for it had boiled all of an hour. The meal over, the father stacked the dishes, and the three of us went outside to a bench on the far side of the shack.

"We allus like to sit a spell in the shade before Stephen goes back into the bank. Pa ever said a man should get his lungs full of good fresh air whenever he could, if he wants to hold out at diggin'."

Presently, to my surprise, the son took from his pocket a small Testament and began to read, first half to himself, then quite aloud. When he paused, Uncle Tom remarked, "You see, Stephen follers preachin' of a Sunday. Sometimes they make mock of a man when he's tryin' to serve the Lord. They tap a finger to their head when he passes by."

The son, holding the place in the book with a grimy finger, turned serious eyes toward me. "I reckon it will always be that way, some to mock them that try to live right, but I don't mind. This here place," his glance swept the coal bank, the shack, the scales, the chute, "is as much the Master's vineyard as anywhere, but some don't think that way. They think you've got to be in a fine temple to

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read the Word or to speak on it. I reckon that's why some think I'm off up here," he tapped finger to brow. Then he went on to read aloud a chapter from the book, and that concluded, he placed the small volume in his vest pocket.

Father and son were glad to show me about the bank, on the outside! Nor did I wish to violate their belief in an old superstition that a woman can bring ill luck to the mine she enters. It requires, Uncle Tom told me, about twenty days to dig the opening of a seam, getting it braced ready for taking out coal.

"That is, it can be done in that time if you don't have to cut in no more than twenty-five or thirty feet. It depends whether you are workin' on a slope or a steep hillside."

The bracing timbers, or posts, slanting toward each other at the top, are set about three feet apart against the walls; and across the top, joining two and two, is placed a "header." The header is notched somewhat like the logs for building a house, so that the notches make the header fast to the posts. This is called framing. Another post is imbedded in the floor of the mine, bracing the upright posts. This is called the mud sill. After the posts and header are up, logging is placed behind the uprights. White oak is usually used for mine posts, because it does not split easily. Such wooden walls protect the miner from falling stones and minor cave-ins.

After the opening is made and braced, a narrow-gauge track is put down to carry a buggy, the iron rails spiked to crossties as on a regular railroad. The buggy is also home-made, except the iron wheels, which are made at a foundry in the mill town. The buggy is of heavy wood, bound by

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an iron strip, like a barrel hoop, to give it stength to hold the load of coal.

"The average miner can get out two ton a day," Uncle Tom told me. "Stephen, yonder, got out twenty-five hundred bushel in a month. Some fellows wouldn't get out half that." Here Uncle Tom's thoughts turned backward. "In my young day I got out four ton a day and maybe another fellow would come within half of that. It depends on the man hisself. Today a man is paid a dollar'n a quarter per ton."

The flickering lamp on Stephen's cap looked a mere speck far back beyond the mouth of the dark mine. I wondered just how far back it was.

"This mine is about three hundred yards deep. After you have cut in, you drive your entry up about thirty feet, then you turn off with a room. A room is cut out first about nine feet square, then finally you work it out to where it is about twenty-five feet square, big enough so you can get in there and get out the coal. There are rooms on each side; one like here, you see," he indicated a point on the ground to the right, "and one over there, opposite. We don't cut the rooms out straight in a row right 'longside each other or straight across from each other. Can't put them too close together. It would weaken the walls and wouldn't be safe. It's best to make them about twenty feet apart."

The old man's mind went from posts and rooms to miners' lamps. "In my day the oil I burned in my lamp was lard oil and cotton-seed oil mixed. Today in big company mines the men use carbide lamps. The mine is electrified, the buggies are all metal and run by electricity, with a motorman, and a trolley overhead. In my day we



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always had to pack along an extra supply of oil to make sure our lamp wouldn't go out. Today the coal company keeps carbide in big tin drums down in the mine, and they sell it out to the miners."

Uncle Tom disparaged the dangers of mining. "Forty-eight year I've been runnin' a mine and never had but one man to get hurt in all that time. And that was his own fault. He was workin' in Stephen's place, one day my boy was sick. That man, it was his own carelessness, and he ad-mitted to it," Uncle Tom explained. "He put off his shots—he was shotting what we call a head hole. The shot didn't quite push it all out, and without bracin' it in any way—he knowed better, he should have braced the part left, and he didn't—he started to dig it out, and the whole thing fell on him. Broke his collar bone, hurt his leg and ankle. Today, every man that goes in a bank signs up for workmen's compensation. Protects a man if he's hurt."

Again his thoughts went back to his youth. "We dug our two load a day, thirty-three-and-a-third bushel to the load, seventy-six pound to the bushel, me and pa; dug together our sixty-six-and-two-third bushel, when I was young. Sometimes they'd come to our mine with a two-horse wagon, or if they come from a distance over a rough road, they had four mules pullin' the wagon. And when charcoal furnaces was in these hills I've seen 'em come to the bank with a ox cart. Now fine cars drive up. They take out a gunny sack, ask for two bushel, wrangle and try to get two for the price of one. That kind of a person generally winds up cheatin' a man by not givin' him the right money and drivin' off, like you seen this mornin'—in fine cars, mind you, not in wagons.

"When I was a boy we could wear leather shoes into

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the mine, even if it was a wet one. We'd just rub our shoes good with mutton taller and they'd turn water. The leather was tanned slow in them days and tanned right. But now they tan it with chemicals. It is just nat'erly burned up with chemicals and won't last no time and it won't turn water. Miners have to wear rubber boots if they're workin' in a wet mine, if they want to keep their feet dry these days. We're lucky here, this mine is dry. It's high on the hillside, you see."

He turned from one phase of the miner's work to another. "We use dynamite [he pronounced it dena-mite] for blasting where it is damp, because our black powder won't go off in such places. We set it off with a fuse and then hurry into another room while it goes off. A fuse," he showed me, "is fifty to a hundred feet long, done up in a coil like a clothes line. A little end is left sticking out after you have tamped the fuse in a groove. You bore the groove with a auger. On the end of the fuse you wrap this squib, no bigger'n a writin' pencil. After you light that end you've got plenty of time to get away to a place of safety in the mine. Often a room is dug out bigger than the mouth: this one, you see, is about twenty foot across, but if we open a room and there's a lot of coal, we don't leave it till we get all the coal, so long as it is safe for workin'."

I was wondering how he went about locating a mine, and was scraping with a stick I'd picked up against the hillside, to see the nature of the ground under the cluster of moss and vines.

"Oncet a curious man was doing just what you're doing," said Uncle Tom, "and that's how come him to find a rich seam of coal. You see a man knows where coal is by

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a kind of stain, or 'bloom of coal,' we call it. The earth is sort of striped: some red stripes, and there will be black streaks runnin' along between the red, and generally you'll find a seam of coal when it's like that. But to make sure, you can pick up some of that clay in your hand and if it feels oily, that's the sign of coal, but if it's gritty, then you know it's got no coal in it—there's too much stone."

Together we walked slowly back to the shack, for Stephen was long since at his work in the bank and customers were coming along now with wagon, mule cart, pushcart and truck. These were the people who greeted Uncle Tom with courteous, kindly smiles and paid him with utmost care and honesty.

"Cold weather makes it good for sellin'," the old man remarked. "Sold eight thousand bushel in January." We had resumed our place on the bench outside the shack.

"I've seen some curious things inside the bank, in the stone that we sometimes run into. I've seen a formation that looked p'int blank like an alligator. Oncet I found a skeleton, even to the skull, and a man I give it to, he had a sight of book learnin'. He studied on that skeleton a long time. He said it was the bones of a Cherokee Indian. You know," Uncle Tom confided naively, "there's different kinds of Indians. Some is Cherokees and some is Mohawks and some is Sioux, but the man I give that carcass to said he was confident it was the skeleton of a Cherokee because that was the race that roved the Big Sandy country before the white men fit 'em off.

"I found a petrified toad in that bank yonder, and a Indian pipe of stone, and several arrowheads in a heap together. And, curious, ain't it—not a month ago, when we opened another room, there in the stone was the print

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of a automobile tire. Now you know such things were not made in the red men's time. How you reckon," he raised an inquisitive brow, "such as that could be printed in stone way back under the hill? I can't master such curiosities as that." He shook his head in perplexity.

"There's a heap o' people workin' around coal mines that are superstitious about one thing and another. Now I knowed a man started in one morning, whistlin' as peert as a jay bird. Well, he ketched a glimpse of a rat scurryin' acrost the track. He dropped his pick and went jumpin' out of the place fastern' a rabbit. Said the rat was a warnin' of danger. The mine boss twitted him about bein' a 'fraid cat. Well, that very day a chunk of slag fell on the mine boss's head, him standin' right where that rat run acrost. They packed the mine boss out stone dead. You see, rats have keen ears. They can hear the warning sounds when a mine is crackin' overhead. They hear better than humans. They run for safety outside, and if a miner has his wits and knows these things, he'll foller the rats out to safety."

A month or so after my visit to Uncle Tom's mine, I came around the hill from the opposite direction and stopped in to see his wife, Emma. To my surprise, he was at home, seated in a rocker with a flowered calico cushion behind his head.

In response to my query he said, "No, I didn't get hurt in the bank. I've got influenzie, and I ain't been fit for nothin'."

"You're looking fine." I stretched the blanket somewhat, for the old fellow was actually thin and pale.

"He's fell off around his middlin's till he couldn't keep up his breeches if it wasn't for his galluses," Emma said dolefully.

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"It's a bright sunny day," I waxed enthusiastic, "come along out here in the sunlight and let me make a picture of you, Uncle Tom. It will be a nice gift for the grandchildren when they grow up."

I had not noticed his wife behind his back, doing her best to silence me, until she made a brave effort to cough and then, attracting my attention, put finger to her lip and shook her head.

"No," Uncle Tom was saying, and there was fear in his voice, "I don't want my likeness took when I'm sick."

Later his wife went out to the gate with me. "It's bad luck," she dropped her voice, keeping an eye on the house as if Uncle Tom might hear, "he believes it's bad luck for a body to have their picture took when they're sick. Once a man makin' tintypes went through this country and he stopped at old Uncle Lon Tilsford's, over on Possum Trot. The old man was just kinda ailin'. Well, nothing would do his daughter but they have a tintype made of her pa. He'd never had no likeness of hisself in all his life. That very day before sundown he lay a corpse. They've got his tintype to this day. And he's not the only one. Same thing happened to Jeff Smiley's woman, Norie, on Greasy Fork. She got up one morning with a turrible misery in her side. Lasted her all week. Well, the tintype man was comin' 'long the road and Norie her own self sent one of the youngins out to tell him to come in. Said she had a warnin' of death, did Norie, and wanted to have a likeness of herself left behind for her family. The likeness were took, and so was Norie. She was stark dead before her man got in from the coal bank."

# 7.

## MAKIN'

CROSSING THE FOOT LOG OVER A SMALL STREAM ONE spring day, trying to balance myself with portable typewriter in one hand, brief case in the other, I slipped and fell, sending my possessions helter skelter to the muddy ground. I pulled myself up on the slippery log, straightened my wide-brimmed sailor hat, adjusted the loose hairpins, and tried to stand. A sharp pain struck through my ankle. I sank back on the log again, dabbing at my eyes to keep back the tears.

Suddenly I was aware of other eyes watching me. It could not have been a sound that caused me to look toward a certain clump of bushes off to one side. There was no sound; there was a deathlike silence in the woods. But I felt eyes upon me. I had heard from childhood that snakes could charm birds; maybe a snake could charm a person too. I gripped the log and sat transfixed. From the thick foliage of rhododendron that held my gaze there certainly was an eye peering at me. A single eye! But it wasn't that of a snake or wildcat, though it might have been, for the fear it sent through me, and the goose bumps creeping up my spine. It was the lone eye of a man, glistening snakelike at me out of a bewhiskered face.

"Who you lookin' for?" he called in a husky voice.

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When at last I found my tongue I answered, a-tremble, "B-b-brother Vinton's f-f-folks."

"Well, you're up the wrong holler!" the one-eyed man snapped, at the same time stepping out into full view. He was wearing over his patched shirt and baggy trousers a long overcoat that fell far below his knees, a coat that might have been black at one time, though now it was a faded greenish brown. The flaps of the big pockets were worn almost to shreds; you'd know the owner had thrust his hands in and out of those pockets many times. Even now his hands were deep in them. He stood in a stooping posture, as if holding heavy weights in both hands, almost humped over. Now that he had stepped from his hiding place I took him in from head to foot. I remembered seeing him skulk in and out of stores and offices and second-hand places down in a mill town where I had once been employed. That was in the days of prohibition. I recalled vividly once seeing him, quite stooped, hands deep in pockets, going into a secondhand store and coming out, a few moments later, much straighter, though his hands were still in his overcoat pockets. "One-eye's been diggin' agin!" I heard a sleek-haired lad say, with a wink at his companion. "Thornie's had a good run!" the other answered and they exchanged knowing looks as the long-coated figure skulked off up an alley. And now here he was with his glistening, snakelike eye on me, scarcely a stone's throw between us.

"Brother Vinton's folks ain't on this creek," he said deliberately, watching me all the time from where he stood as I limped painfully about, gathering up my things. It seemed unusual for a mountain man not to step forward with courtly manner to lend a helping hand. The one-

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eyed man stood stock still. "Brother Vinton's folks ain't nowhere near here. If you're lookin' for them," he paused, eyeing me suspiciously, "you best pick up your contrapshuns and walk that log back the way you come, and turn off on the footpath on yon side. Ricollect—on yon side—not this a-way, and keep straight ahead on the left-hand side."

He watched with an unflinching eye while I, pains shooting like a knife through my ankle, limped slowly back over the foot log, balancing myself uncertainly with muddy typewriter in one hand and muddier brief case in the other. No bedeviled sailor ever walked the plank with greater fear and trembling than I walked that slippery foot log with the snakelike eye of the bewhiskered fellow behind the bush fixed upon me. Once I reached the other side I limped off as fast as I could along the narrow footpath. But in my fear and uncertainty again I lost my way. Should I take this path or that? I pondered a moment, then struck off on a path that soon led me within sight of a little log house. I made toward it.

By this time my ankle was so swollen I had to unbutton my high-top shoe to ease the pain. The stones had cut through the thin leather and pierced my skin. I could see the blood oozing. But I dare not stop. As I drew near the cabin a woman, standing in the door with a baby in her arms, at sight of me did not keep her place in the doorway, as mountain women are accustomed to doing to greet the stranger. She came quickly—quickly, bless you—down the lane toward the gate. I stopped, set down my portable and brief case, and stood empty handed to greet her. I kept my wits about me that far as to mountain customs. I waited for her to speak.



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Pale, she was, with black hair that set off her colorless face. She coughed an empty cough, hand to chest. The ravages of consumption were upon her, without doubt. For all of a full minute she stood silent, eyeing me suspiciously. Her black eyes were fairly riveted on my muddy feet, especially upon the foot with the unbuttoned shoe.

"Set down there on that rock," she indicated a stone near the split-rail fence, "an' pull off your shoe, an' your stockin', too," she said in a slow voice. I lost no time in obeying orders, for orders they surely were. The woman leaned over the rider of the rail fence and peered at my swollen and bleeding ankle.

"Open up them contrapshuns you're packin', if you don't mind," she said in the same low, even tones. She looked with keen interest at my opened portable, the glistening keys. My personal things in the brief case, a brush, a comb, a sleeping garment, papers and erasers, did not concern her in the least, though she did look with a questioning eye at the tucking comb that lay among the other things, which I meant to take to Brother Vinton's wife. Still on her side of the split-rail fence, she called back toward the house: "Phoebe! Come hure!"

A little girl appeared instantly in the open door and darted down the lane toward us. Beside the woman, she stood stock still, hands behind her back, looking curiously at me, especially at the bleeding and swollen ankle. "Phoebe," the woman said, "whilst I holp this strange woman pack her contrapshuns to the house, you run along and tell Grandpa to fill up the teakettle and putt it on the stove."

The child and the woman exchanged a lightninglike glance of understanding.

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"Best putt on your shoe again," the woman said when the little girl had hurried off. "Now, hure," she said, picking up my portable and brief case as though they were light as feathers, "I'll pack 'em."

"But you've got the baby," I protested feebly. "Let me carry the typewriter, at least."

She spurned my offer to help. "You're in misery. Anybody can see that with one eye. You've turned pale as a bed sheet. A body would think you'd seen a haynt."

"Maybe it was the fall, and—" I faltered.

"And what?" It was the way she halted suddenly, and the way her arm suddenly gripped her side, that made me out with it.

"I guess it startled me a little when the old gentleman, down by the creek, tried to put me on the right path." With great care I sought the right words, for my long experience in traveling the mountains had taught me to answer carefully. Mountain people want no beating around the bush.

"Did that old man you were namin' have two good eyes?" the woman asked slowly.

"No." I paused a breathless moment. "He had just one eye."

The woman gripped the baby till it grunted. Eyes narrowed to a slit, she turned to me. "Which way did he tell you to go?" she demanded in a frightened voice.

"Not this way, I'm sure of it," I blurted. "He told me to follow the path to the left—yes, I'm sure he said the left—but my ankle pained so, I guess I got confused. I've turned to the right. I hope you don't mind," I offered apologetically, "it wasn't his fault. I hope you don't mind."

"No—not a-tall," she shook her head as if to clear her

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thoughts. "Come along, let's get to the house." She stepped with a steady stride, coughing that hollow cough now and then. I rested a hand lightly as possible on her arm.

As soon as we crossed the threshold, an old man emerged from the chimney corner. He was folding a jackknife with one hand, and with the other brushing shavings from his breeches. He had kindly eyes; his hair was snow white, and so was his long beard save where it was tobacco-stained about the mouth. He bowed graciously to me as the woman said, "Pa, this woman's come to bad luck. She's bruised her meat and I'm afear-ed she's sprained her ankle j'int."

The old man dragged up a chair. "Set!" he invited, and I sank wearily into the homemade hickory chair before the hearth. "Pull off your shoe!" he said gently. "Marthie," he turned to the woman, "let Phoebe mind the baby and you lend a hand here. Script're speaks of the deeds of the good Samaritan. We've not got much to do with," he said in a kindly voice, "but willin' hands mebbe can make up for what's lackin'."

"Pa's handy with such as this." Martha stood behind my chair, having bathed my foot in a tin washpan filled with warm water from the teakettle. Also, at the old man's direction, Martha had brought a jug of vinegar and put a few drops into the water. "It will ease down the swellin'," he said, as he traced a gentle finger over the bleeding ankle. "We'll wropt it," he decided, and Martha brought from a drawer of a high chest in the corner a clean piece of muslin.

A green log sputtered on the andirons in the great fireplace. Even though it was late spring, there was chill in

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the air, and the heat of the blazing logs felt soothing to my ankle, swollen now double its size. There was a great discolored spot near the joint.

"Best draw out that black blood," the old man said. "Such as that could turn to blood pizen if it's not tended to. Mind the time, Marthie," he addressed his daughter, "when Brother Vinton busted his foot nigh open with a hoe?"

"His meat turned black as your hat, pa, I ricollect. Hadn't been that you had a leech or two handy, Brother Vinton his own self said it, he'd a died of pizen. Blood pizen!"

"Oh," I managed a smile, "I remember hearing Brother Vinton tell that, one time when he was preaching over on Burning Bush. I was on my way to Brother Vinton's today when I got lost. I meant to take his wife—Sister Vinton we always call her—the tucking comb you saw in my bag."

The old man's eyes lighted with a friendly smile, and Martha, who had so tenderly bathed my bruised flesh, and little Phoebe, holding the baby, drew closer in a common bond of friendship. There was a moment of silence. The old man looked from the woman to the child, and they looked back at him.

The old man spoke first. "Vinton's folks, for all they are a good long piece from here, they've been powerful kind to us since Marthie's man, Jonathan, my son, were—"

"Killed. In cold blood!" Martha's voice cut across the hush at the fireside.

"Daughter, daughter," the white-haired man chided softly. "We've got to stand what the Lord sends on us. 'Twere His will, I reckon." And then he urged in a quiet,

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gentle voice: "Come, let us give comfort to the wayfarer at our fireside. Fetch me a leech, Marthiel!"

The widow of his son disappeared into the lean-to kitchen, and returned presently with a small china mug. The handle was broken off and only the faintest tracing was left of pink roses and gilt which once had spelled "Father." The old man took the cup, turned it upside down on my swollen ankle, tapped it briskly, withdrew it.

When I looked down there was a leech stuck fast to the discolored flesh. I felt myself swaying. Everything went black before me.

"Nothin' to be skeert of," Martha was saying as she patted my shoulder gently. Little Phoebe, shifting the baby from one arm to the other, looked on in silence.

It was all of three weeks before I was able to go on my way. Even then, Martha was reluctant to let me go. Nor did I try to get to Brother Vinton's on that trip. "You're welcome to what we've got," she'd say again and again when I offered a word about imposing upon their hospitality. "It pleasures us to have you around, p'tikler pa. Likes to sit and make talk with you when he comes in."

The old man must have gotten up before daylight, for even though Martha and little Phoebe and the baby and I were at breakfast by sunup, he was never there. "Pa had to get a soon start this morning," Martha said a time or two, though she never said where to, nor for what, he had to get a "soon start." I recalled that afterward.

It was the night of that same day when I had limped across their doorstep that I had heard Martha and her white-haired father-in-law talking in low tones in the kitchen while she was washing the supper dishes. I had

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fallen asleep in the chair before the fire and little Phoebe was at my side, keeping watch. The baby lay asleep on the bed.

"Pa, I 'lowed Thornie had blabbed when I seen this strange woman!" Martha was saying in hushed tones.

"Hesh," the old man whispered. "You mustn't be so quick to jedge. We can confidence Thornie. He don't want to make trouble for a lorn widder woman with little uns lookin' to her for their bread. Thornie wouldn't harm a old man that's nigh past goin', like me."

And again the hushed voice of Martha. "Pa, sometimes I'm afear-ed he sees more with that one eye than—"

"He can't of his own knowin' prove nothin'," the old man retorted. "And nohow, I'm within my rights, same as Jonathan were. The law can't—"

Perhaps Martha dropped a cup; whatever it was, I was wide awake, and straightened suddenly. Little Phoebe at my side was singing forthwith in a high-pitched voice and rocking to and fro, her small hands clasped about her knees. Martha and the old man appeared suddenly at the door which led into the lean-to kitchen. I supposed I had been dreaming.

"Was this woman wantin' a drink o' water, or some-thin'?" Martha asked anxiously of little Phoebe.

"Lan' sakes, no!" the little girl answered, with a quick glance at her elders. "She drapped off to sleep and woke up of a suddint like."

Grandpa exchanged a glance with Martha. "Dreamin' of drappin' off the foot log, I reckon."

"I reckon," Martha nodded assent. They withdrew to the kitchen, where Martha continued the dish washing. I heard the footfalls of the old man across the back stoop.

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I supposed he was going to the barn to finish his chores.

I shared one bed in the main room of the log cabin for many a night with Martha and her two children. The other bed in the far corner was for the old man, though, looking back afterward, I could never remember seeing the old fellow actually asleep upon it. Indeed, as I remembered, the bed never had the appearance of being slept upon. The coverlids and pillows were always smooth and in order by the time I was up, just as they had been the night before. I recalled that too, afterward.

"Us wimmin can dress and undress behind the chist of drawers," Martha said, that first night, "when pa's around. Most generally me and Phoebe and the baby are sleepin' sound as a chick under a hen's wing ginst pa gets through potherin' around, lookin' after the property, feedin' the hogs and such," she explained. "We allus jest let pa pick his own bedtime." Martha took care to make that clear.

I recalled, long after I had left their home, hearing Martha talking in low tones on more than one occasion to someone outside in the dark. Once I was sure the voice—it was a man's—was quite insistent, but Martha repeated firmly, "No, Thornie ain't dug none yet today," and again: "No, I tell you, Thornie ain't dug none yet today and pa's not been around all day. Been gone all day." I heard the man mutter and ride off. That happened on more than one occasion. At such times, when Martha would come back into the room where I sat before the fire, I recalled afterward how strangely, watchfully she would look at me.

Sometimes a man would drive up the lane with a jolt wagon, throw the reins over a fence post, and shamble slowly toward the potato patch where the old father was,

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as I supposed, digging potatoes. The visitor usually had a gunny sack over his shoulder.

My ankle remained too painful to bear my weight, so I learned to hobble about on a gnarled staff the old fellow brought into me from the woods. There was a wide, well-curved part at the top, that just fitted under my arm, and a great knot half way down on which I could rest my hand. How it pleased the old man when I thanked him for it, calling him "Grandpa" just as little Phoebe did and as Martha often did.

One day I ventured to hobble forth from the kitchen door on my crutch. Grandpa was in the potato patch, hoe in hand, talking to a man who had just driven up. I thought I heard the man say: "Make it a half dozen—no, I'll take a dozen." He opened the gunny sack and held it in front of him. Presently another man came up, on a mule. He dismounted, flung his bridle over a fence post, took the saddle bags off the mule's back and, carrying them over his arm, went to talk with Grandpa in the potato patch. I turned in the doorway to speak to Martha, who was cleaning up the kitchen. I had noticed that the man with the saddle bags was rather bending under his load as he went back to his mule.

"You must get a lot of potatoes out of that patch," I said. "That man had all he could carry away in his saddle bags."

Martha dropped the dish pan where she was trying to hang it on the wall; dropped it with a resounding bang. When she turned, seeing me in the doorway, her face went bloodless.

"Oh, I'm sorry I startled you," I said. "I shouldn't go prowling around on my crutch—"



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"You'll mebbe aggrevate your ankle j'int," she stammered. "Hure, let me help you back to your cheer. Don't never, never venture nowhars without you call out to me or to Phoebe or pa, if he's about." She spoke emphatically.

It could not have been any more than a night or two after that when something caused me to wake up suddenly. I had lain down on the side of the bed, before undressing, to ease the throbbing in my ankle. I meant to ask Grandpa if he didn't think the bandage ought to be taken off and the joint rubbed with goose grease and liniment again. His home remedies never failed to ease the pain and the swelling. The discoloration, thanks to the leech, had quite gone, but the throbbing returned again and again. I napped, and then something startled me into wakefulness. Little Phoebe was sitting by the fire, holding the baby. Martha and Grandpa were nowhere to be seen. There was not a sound, but I caught the glimpse of a skulking figure pass in the firelight and swiftly disappear into the kitchen, the figure of a stooping man, in a long overcoat, hands deep in the pockets. It was a mere glimpse and he was gone; only the grotesque shadow moved across the rough log wall and vanished. I was certain it was the one-eyed man whom I had encountered at the foot log.

I sat up on the side of the bed. As soon as Phoebe saw me she started singing in her high-pitched voice. Martha appeared at the kitchen door, the old gray-haired man at the front door. Phoebe's song ceased.

"Is your ankle j'int painin' you?" Martha asked solicitously as though that were her only concern.

Just then a gun shot, then another, cut across the stillness of the night. Grandpa flashed a swift look at Martha,

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then at Phoebe. The baby whimpered. But no word was spoken.

That night we sat a long time by the fireside. Martha was sewing on buttons and mending, little Phoebe was doing her best to piece together some bright patches of calico her mother had given her. I was still struggling with crochet needle and thread, under the watchful eye of Martha, "to loop two, drop one." Grandpa was whittling: not an ax handle, as you might expect, but a long wooden fork. I tossed aside my hopeless crocheting to watch him. I could see he was pleased.

Slowly, carefully, he whittled and scraped. The long fork, tall as the old man's shoulder, had six prongs, each a foot in length and an inch thick. The prongs were whittled out of the same piece of wood as the rounded handle. It must have been a fairly good sized sapling to start with, with a broad base. I had seen the crude implement standing in the chimney corner the day I came. Grandpa must have been whittling on it then, for he was brushing shavings from his clothes when I entered.

Whenever he had a spare moment about the house he turned to his task of whittling. The rounded handle of the long fork, now reduced to no more than five inches, fitted his grasp. He tested it again and again, this evening, taking off with his knife blade a little more and a little more until it was right. "Just right!" he said to Martha as he stood up and went through the motion of scraping the floor with the long-toothed fork. "Good lasty oak. Last me my life time." And Martha nodded approval. Phoebe looked up at her mother, then exchanged knowing looks with Grandpa. I praised his handicraft, touched caressingly the smooth handle, praised the skill of the neatly whittled

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fork. But never once did I ask the purpose of the strange-looking implement. I could see Grandpa was pleased with my conduct.

A night or so after that, Martha and Phoebe and the baby and I were in the kitchen. Phoebe held the baby. Martha was stirring with a long spoon the boiling molasses in the iron pot on the stove. "We'll have us a plate o' taffy before we know it," she was saying to Phoebe who watched with eager young eyes. "Phoebe's deservin' of some taffy. She's ever prompt to do whatever I ask," Martha praised her child and little Phoebe fairly blushed, patting a hand atop the baby's plump hand. "Woman," Martha turned to me, "take you that plate offen the table and butter it good so's we can pour the taffy on there. And ginst it cools, you and Phoebe can pull to your heart's content. See who can pull their taffy the whitest. I'll take little Jonathan and nuss him to sleep then."

We were all busy at our tasks. The taffy was poured into buttered plate, and when it cooled sufficiently, little Phoebe and I each pulled our portion for dear life. Martha was jolting to and fro in a straight chair, the baby in her arms. The taffy was coiled into pretty white ropes around and around on the buttered plate. Martha put the baby on the bed, tiptoed back to the kitchen so as not to waken him. Phoebe and I were sitting side by side, waiting till the taffy would be hard enough to take from the plate.

"Pulled white like that," Martha observed, "I'm satisfied it's ready to take up now." Little Phoebe's eyes danced with delight. Never had I seen such happiness, over so little, in a child's face.

"Phoebe's deservin' of this treat, taffy with vanilla

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flavorin' in it. Did you know that, Phoebe? Vanilla flavorin'?"

"Oh, mommy, you and Grandpa's done it! Made it up for a surprise."

"Yes," answered Martha, her eyes shining, "on account it's your birthday night, Phoebe. You're six year old this very night, do you appreciate that?"

Two shots rang out in the darkness outside. Martha dropped the plate, sending the white ropes of taffy skipping in a hundred pieces. Another shot echoed out of the far-off hollow. Martha looked at Phoebe. Their lips formed the soundless word: "Grandpa!" A few days after that, when I saw the old man, his right hand was wrapped, and there were blood stains on the bandage. I could tell from the shape of the hand that the first finger was missing.

On that day Martha was hanging out a washing, though only yesterday she had washed everything on the place, it seemed to me. I was certain, anyway, that I had seen her wash Phoebe's little red-flowered calico with the bow strings on it; I had seen it fluttering on the clothes line that reached from the kitchen door to a tree at the far end of the potato patch. But bless you, there she was hanging it out again on the line, and a towel beside it. She made the pieces fast with clothes pins, then came back and stood in the kitchen door a moment, looking down the road. It was not until then that I looked in the same direction and saw two men riding toward the house. Martha mumbled something to me about peeling potatoes for dinner. "You know where the crock is and the knife—get you that cheer over there handy to the potato basket, 'longside the sugar barrel." All these things I knew. Sometimes when drying the dishes I'd put them on top of the

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sugar barrel, and Phoebe would carry them on to the cupboard. Once I saw Martha lift a great bag of sugar from the barrel, which later I saw Grandpa carrying out toward the barn. I did know that cattle ate salt, but I was puzzled about the sugar. I set at my task of peeling potatoes as Martha suggested.

As she went out the kitchen door she picked up a towel, clean and dry, that hung on the back of a chair. I wondered why she took it and hung it on the line. Over my shoulder in the cracked looking glass that hung on the wall I saw the two men come up the lane. One remained on his horse; the other dismounted, carrying his saddle bags over his arm, and went to where Martha was hanging out clothes or, rather, taking them down. She took Phoebe's little red dress down, dropped it to the ground, and it seemed to me she fumbled around quite a while before she arose. When she got up the dress was tucked around her hands. She reached her covered hands toward the saddle bags, held open now by the man. Just then, little Phoebe, who followed my gaze, crept quietly between me and the door, shutting off the view to the potato patch. I heard the two horsemen ride off at a lively clip.

One night when the moon was in the full, Martha and the children and I were seated before the fire. Grandpa hadn't been anywhere in sight all day. Martha was sewing, and Phoebe, too. "See," she offered proudly, "I've nigh pieced two whole blocks." My praise was unstinted at the neatness of her stitches, the smoothness of the patches. Phoebe's eyes danced at a word of praise, and Martha was more pleased than if the praise were for her. The baby was fast asleep on the bed; the little fellow had

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romped and tumbled all day; by the time night came he was tired out. I had put aside my typewriter after transcribing some notes Martha had given me on how to make "pickle lily," "chowchow," beet pickles, and blackberry preserves. Always little Phoebe fairly hovered at my side as long as the typewriter clicked. She meant to be a "short writer" some day, she declared. She was pleased beyond words when I let her pick out the letters of her name and "make it off" on the typewriter. But much as the machine fascinated her, Phoebe never offered to lift the lid and touch it. So much regard has the mountain child for the property of another. It was pleasant, now, sitting with the little family at their fireside. As contented and home-loving a little family as you'd ever look in upon.

And then the stillness of the night was broken by the piteous yelp of a dog in the distant hollow. Martha, with quick hand to throat, looked fearfully at Phoebe. The child flashed an understanding, fearful look back to her mother. Though Grandpa still had not made his appearance, neither of them mentioned him, though somehow I connected the yelping of the dog with a warning, somehow, in their minds of danger. Since they never referred in any way to Grandpa's goings and comings at unusual times and hours, least of all would I, the stranger within their gate, venture to do so. We of the level land learn early in our travels in the mountains of Kentucky to ask no questions about anything that is said or done by the people. Yet at times it took all the will power I could muster to hold my tongue.

As the days of my forced stay under their roof lengthened into weeks my nerves were getting on edge, what with the strange, swift looks of frightened eyes; mother to

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child, daughter to gray-haired grandfather; the murmurings outside the house in the darkness of night; the strange absences of Grandpa, his reappearances at early morning hours; the ever-watchful eyes upon me. Never was I left alone. If it was not little Phoebe close beside me, it was Martha. Or if I sat at the hearth in the twilight after dishes were done, if neither of the others were near me, then it was Grandpa. Though at all times they were kindly and most friendly, I was aware of suspicion, of being guarded.

One night, when the moon was in the full, I stepped into the kitchen to get a drink of water. As I lifted the gourd dipper from the water bucket, I happened to look off through the open door toward the barn, and saw, not the stooped figure of the one-eyed Thornie, but Grandpa himself, with a great gunny sack on his back, coming out of the barn. He stepped across the barn lot, quickly for an old man, and disappeared into a thicket a short distance away. He soon came back; he must have put down his load, or passed it on to another; disappeared into the barn and a moment later reappeared carrying the long-handled wooden fork which he had spent hours in whittling. He carried it, not over his shoulder as you would a hoe, but walked with it like a staff. I watched him climb up the rough mountainside, gripping the long wood fork, his wide-brimmed felt drawn low on his silver hair, his white beard pillowed on his bosom. Up the rock path he trudged, more slowly than he had descended it, till he again disappeared in the thicket. . . .

Another spring came to the mountains. Summer passed, and the "falling weather" with all its gay garlands of scarlet-red leaves and russet-brown, goldenrod and brilliant

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vari-colored sumac bedecking mountainside and quiet ravine. I was passing through a county seat in the Big Sandy country when the clanging of the courthouse bell drew me toward the queer little seat of justice down the dusty road. I had, for a time, abandoned my beloved vocation of court reporting, to pursue the intriguing avocation of ballad hunting. But even so there was, and will always be for me, an impelling charm to the clang of the courthouse bell, and I walked down to see what acquaintance I might chance upon. A group of men stood talking in undertones.

"I told Grandpa he couldn't confidence Thornie. I know-ed that one-eyed snake would turn him in sooner or later!" said a gaunt fellow.

"The law killed Marthie's man, and Jonathan were in his rights. The law had no call to kill him!" said another. I felt the blood turn to ice in my veins.

"What's a widder woman to do for bread for her youngins?" asked another. "Grandpa's gettin' on in years. He can't raise no crop no more, and the law's crippled his right hand!"

"Finger plumb shot off. Wonder it didn't cause the old feller to die o' blood pizen." The gaunt fellow spoke again.

"Would have, exceptin' that the old man's got a heap o' knowin' how to 'tend such things. A knowin' of healin' yarbs and of how to draw out black blood—" the speaker stopped short as one of the others nudged him. A stranger, rather well dressed, was passing, headed toward the courthouse. The group of men exchanged knowing looks and stood silent till he had gone.

"Makin' is no harm for Grandpa, no harm for Marthie to help out."



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A newcomer shambled across the road and joined the group. "They ketched Grandpa diggin' in his 'tater patch oncet too often!" he remarked.

"Thornie couldn't dig no more arter he ketched that buckshot full in the hand," the gaunt fellow said.

Now and then one or two of the group looked in my direction, indifferently. I had sat down on a stone by the roadside and was fumbling with my shoe; a small pebble had slipped in over the top. Served me right, I thought, for giving up the high-topped button shoes for low, heavy-soled, walking Oxfords.

"How many did they find in the 'tater patch?" the discussion went on.

"Six half pints and a full dozen quarts, all in one row."

"Some lay it to Marthie's carelessness. Maybe Marthie were too trusty. She were puttin' out her washin' same as ever, looked down the road, thought she know-ed the two fellers ridin' up. They rid in, same as ever, saddle bag on arm; one come to the patch. Well, Marthie drapped a garmint off the clothes line, honkered down, same as ever, scratched in the soft ground, like Grandpa ever kept it hoed up soft. Marthie slipped the bottles under kiver of her wropt-up hands into the saddle bags. Money passed."

"The white-livered law warranted Marthie and pore old Grandpa!" The gaunt fellow's voice trembled with anger. "That snake of a Thornie was spyin', off in the brush, to give evidence!"

"From what I hear, 'pears like that fixy hill billy that bought out Tackett's store down to the crossroads, he talked too much. Told how many bags of sugar in one week's time he sold Grandpa, and how many glass jars. Grandpa's been usin' them quart fruit jars of late, and

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them big gallon glass jugs. Been runnin' off his liquor in them big jugs."

"The upshot of it all is, one of the Mosleys got miffed at Marthie. He's been makin' his brags he aimed to court Jonathan's widdler. Went to the house a time or two to get a pint, or a quart mebbe. Marthie told him Thornie hadn't dug none that day and that Grandpa hadn't been around all day. Made him mad as a sarpint! 'Lowed Marthie wasn't speakin' truth. He rode off in a huff. I reckon he talked too much. Then when that cloven-foot deputy sold his vote—you might say he got his office by buyin' it from the high sheriff, that had more territory than he could cover rightly—well, this small law, that's what he is, that cloven-foot deputy—small law!—he was a-bound to turn in some arrests. He taken a shot at Thornie, then old one-eye went stumblin' back under the clift. Stayed there three days without grub, his hand tore and bleedin'. Thornie went ragin' mad. Swore he was through packin' jugs for Grandpa. Said he'd packed jugs till his back was nigh broke, humpin' over."

"They do say," the newcomer spoke in a low voice, "that Marthie and little Phoebe had warnin' that Grandpa and her household were in danger. One night they hear-ed the pitiful yelp of a hound plumb acrost the mountain. They know-ed it to be the yelp of old Brother Vinton's hound dog, and them a-livin' plumb acrost the ride on t'other fork of the creek."

The whole story was revealed to me now. Each incident leaped vividly before my mind, stripped of its mystery. I knew now the explanation for the frightened looks from man to woman, from woman to child. I knew the meaning of the hushed, insistent voices outside the house in the

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darkness; the skulking stooped figure past the firelight. But also I remembered their kindness to me, the stranger under their humble roof; Grandpa's care and gentleness in restoring my twisted ankle, which, except for his skill and knowin' might have left me a cripple. I remembered the tenderness in Martha's voice, like a loving sister as she stood at my side administering to me in suffering. And then, through brimming eyes, I saw the little family walking slowly, fearfully, between officers of the law, up the well-worn steps of the courthouse. At a distance I followed them. The group of men who had stood huddled by the roadside already had passed down the dusty road and entered the court room.

When Martha lifted her eyes to be sworn, so white and drawn was her face framed in the dark hair, so stooped were the thin shoulders, I thought she had not much longer to live under the best of circumstances. When her eyes met mine I wanted to cry out, "Courage, Martha, courage!" And then her own gentle voice echoed in my ears, that day when she had put an encouraging arm about my shoulders when I had fainted dead away in fear. "Nothin' to be skeert of!" she had whispered tenderly. Courage, Martha, courage! my heart cried out though my lips dare not speak. Perhaps she heard the message, for her dark eyes sought mine and held them.

When Grandpa raised a shattered right hand to take the oath to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, I seemed to see not a violator of the law, but a kindly old man with earnest eyes, snow-white hair, a flowing, patriarchal beard.

At long last Martha's case was disposed of: "insufficient evidence." I breathed a sigh of relief. And then Grandpa.

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Had he done this, had he done that; whom had he dealt with while he was engaged in the "illicit distilling of . . . intoxicating . . . spirits vinous malt . . . liquor . . ."? A verbose, repetitious preliminary accompanied each question.

At length Grandpa, his patience utterly worn out, arose from the witness box, a section of an old-time church bench, high of sides, straight of back. Grandpa's firm hand, the right hand with the missing finger, gripped the side of the box. "Your honor, Judge!" He bowed his head ever so slightly to the court. "Men!" His earnest eyes swept the jury. "There's no need beatin' the devil around the bush no longer! Dare I speak?" He paused a split second to gaze at the judge. There was purpose in the deep-lined face of old Grandpa. The judge nodded assent. The jury, some twiddling their thumbs, others leaning forward now and then to let fly a stream of tobacco juice into the sawdust box inside the railing that separated them from the prisoners and lawyers, turned an indifferent ear.

"My granduns, here," said the old man, "ain't got no pa no more to look arter 'em. Just Marthie, their ma, and she's frail and drinlin', as you can see, with lung consumption.

"My granduns, little Phoebe yonder, and the baby, and Marthie, their mother, and me—we've got a right to live!" The stern voice trembled. "We've got a right to live offen what's ours—our land. And now the law"—the sturdy arm shot forward, the hand with its missing finger clenched into a horny fist—"your law taken my boy Jonathan, shot him down in cold blood," Grandpa's eyes blazed with fury, "because he were makin'! Makin', of our own corn we raised on our own land. Jonathan were in his rights!



A mountain family: distant kin of Henry Clay



A jolt wagon

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I'm in my rights!" The voice was low and steady once more. "Yas, I've been makin'!" The grave eyes swept the jury, fixed now on the judge. "I've been makin'. I own it! And the good Lord lettin' me live I aim to keep on makin', from now to my dyin' day! I aim to take keer of Jonathan's woman, Marthie hure, and the helpless little 'uns, little Phoebe yonder, and Little Jonathan. Do with me, men, what you're a-mind to!"

Grandpa sank into his chair. Crimson spots glowed on his cheeks above the snow-white beard. I saw his hand tremble on the side of the witness box. Not a word had he said of his betrayer, one-eyed Thornie, who sat with his glistening, snakelike eye fixed upon the old man; not once did he even allude to the creature, much less did Grandpa offer a glance in that direction. . . .

The snow was flying when next I went to see my friends. There was a sharp wind blowing through the leafless trees and the frozen ground creaked under foot. I called "Hallo!" as I drew near the house, but only little Phoebe came to the door to answer and bid me welcome. "Mommy's bedfast, but she's been expectin' you," the child said. Then a frail voice called from within, "Come along in, Woman." Martha turned a pale face toward me and reached forth a thin hand from beneath the patchwork quilt that covered her bed. "I kinda 'lowed you'd come for the buryin'—" the words choked in her throat.

"Grandpa," said little Phoebe, "he died. A naterl death." There was gladness in the words for all the child's face was sad. "The law nor Thornie nor none of his crew didn't kill my Grandpa!"

"He were took with a stroke," Martha offered feebly

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from her pillow. " 'Twarn't long arter we got him sprung! 'Peared like he just naterly pined away down yonder; 'peared like the irons that helt his wrists when they taken him off—pa fit like a barr, he'd ort not to a done that, fit like a barr—and then when they putt him in that thar leetle cooped-up place with iron bars in front of him like he were some wild varmint, 'peared like it just plumb broke his speerit." Martha breathed heavily. When she had strength she spoke again. "He'd never let me come nigh. 'Peared like he was shamefaced for us, me and Phoebe and Little Jonathan, for to see him in such a place. But Brother Vinton, he went a time or two. Brother Vinton helpd us to get Grandpa sprung. It taken the biggest part of our place, but I'd a give the last acre, me and Phoebe would 'uv, for to have Grandpa back. And we did give it all, mighty nigh." Martha lifted herself up on her pillow and pointed a thin, trembling finger to the chair in which I sat.

"Right thar he set, proud as a king, holdin' high his head. Died right in that very cheer you settin' in, when he ketched his last breath. 'I'm home, Marthie, I'm home, Phoebe, Little Jonathan, I'm home,' he'd say agin and agin. 'Can't nothin' harm a man under his own rooft. I'm home.' Them were his last words hure by the fireside." Martha's eyes were glassy, flaming spots were on the thin white cheeks. Little Phoebe and Jonathan stood at her bedside. "Mommy," little Phoebe patted her hand, "don't take on that way. Don't you know what Brother Vinton and Sister Vinton said—you're a-bound to quile down if ever you aim to get outten that bed agin!"

It was more than a month before I left them. Martha was up and about, though scarcely able to drag one foot after the other. Little Phoebe and the baby, Jonathan, now



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toddling wherever he was a-mind to go, was peert as a cricket, now in the kitchen, now out trying to catch the small chicks around the door. Some days Martha heeded the advice of older neighbors and lay for an hour or two upon the bed. Sister Vinton came bringing good things to eat and Brother Vinton came too, more than once with a great basket of cooked vittals, for all he had to ride many a long mile from yon fork of the creek and across the ridge. He came and offered comfort in unspoken words. That is the way of Big Sandy folk.

One day the sun was shining warm and cheery. The snow had melted away, there was even a breath of spring in the air. Martha put a shawl about her shoulders. "Come," she said and led the way out of the cabin. Phoebe and the baby were close behind, and I followed the little family. Past the double-crib barn Martha proceeded, then up the stony mountainside, on through the thicket, stopping now and again to get her breath. At last we reached a great overhanging cliff. Little Phoebe and the baby sat down on a log. Martha had gone on a few yards farther and I followed close behind. She stepped lightly now over a depression in the ground. I hesitated for I was sure it was giving way under my feet. "Don't be skeert!" she said, "them planks has helt up heavier people than you. Stand here on this side." With a strong stick Martha scraped the dead leaves away, revealing a covering of rough planks about a yard and a half in length. She lifted one at a time and tossed them aside. There before us was a great sunken barrel. "That's where Jonathan and Grandpa mixed their mash," she said, as casually as though she were telling of mixing corn bread.

It was a crude wooden barrel she had uncovered, sunk

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well into the ground. "Helt sixty gallon," Martha explained. "In makin', Grandpa and Jonathan ever used, well, say, twenty-five pound o' chop—that's cracked corn—to twenty-five pound o' sugar. I've knowed 'em to use honey instead of sugar. Time was when we had a full score of bee stands. But it got so we couldn't keep a one. There was thievin' goin' on. We didn't know who takin' our honey, nor we didn't know who fetched back the empty stands. Some of them triflin' hill billies that come in from the level land, them whose folks oncet was good, honest people on these creeks. It's their youngins growed up that go down to the level land, git above their raisin', learn a lot of meanness, and come back here to carry on their thievin'. Well, nohow, we couldn't keep no bee stands no more. So Jonathan and Grandpa, they had to begin to use sugar.

"Now in makin'," she went on in a quiet voice, "it depends on the weather, the nat're of the weather, how long it takes to work off." Martha left me for a few moments. She disappeared under the overhanging cliff and emerged with a long wooden fork. I knew it to be the one which I had seen Grandpa whittle with such pride and care.

"Here's the fork that he stirred [Martha said steered] the mash with." She showed me how it was done, as we stood together beside the sunken barrel. "You see it had to be steered every few days when it started workin'."

Again she went to the cliff, bringing back this time a copper-lined wash boiler and lid. "Grandpa got the word of the law comin', so he hid the biler and such back under the clift."

With deft hands Martha reconstructed for me the whole process of "makin'!"

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The copper-lined, oval-shaped wash boiler she set up on a crude foundation of stones, like an open oven, a few feet from the sunken barrel. "We built the fire under here. I've helped pack wood for the foir." There was neither boasting nor shame in her voice. "We put biscuit dough around it to make the lid fast on the biler. Now you see this hole punched in the lid," Martha explained, "about as big as a woman's finger ring, see?" She put into it the tip of her finger on which she wore a gold wedding ring. "Through this hole we pass the worm. The worm," she said, in answer to my unspoken question, "is made of copper and it coils round and round. I ever said to Jonathan, 'it coils around like a snake, ready to strike,' and he'd just laugh soft and gentlelike and tell me not to be skeert. The copper worm re'ches from here over to the thumpin' keg."

She had come to say "we" now, though at first the story had been of Jonathan and Grandpa. "A woman's a right to holp her men folks in their work. It's her bounden duty, same as in the field and with the milkin', at butcherin' time and sorghum makin'. Us people, we work hand-in-hand with our household." Again she hurried off to the cliff, returning this time with a sawed-off barrel, much smaller than that which was sunk in the ground.

"This is the thumpin' keg," she said. "We set it up like this." She placed the half keg on a stone slab. "The coil lays in it, and the end comes out the bung hole here at the side. We put a cover over this thumpin' keg; place the coil in it and cover it with cold water. The other end of the coil, you see, is over here in the bilin' kittle. Now, when the brine that we've bailed off of the mash in yonder sunken barrel begins to bile in the copper wash biler, the steam off of it passes through this copper coil. Comes on

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down through here," she traced the process with a slender finger, "into the thumpin' keg. The cold water agin that coil 'stills that brine and it begins to drap out the end of the worm here stickin' out through the bung hole. It's clair as water and we have a jug there for it to drap in, or a cook vessel or a bucket. We run it off half at a time—that's called singlin's—the first time." Martha paused for breath. There was a glow on her cheek and a bright sparkle in her eye.

"We take the singlin's and pour 'em back again over the other half of sour mash in the kittle. That we call doublin' back. The second time it's run off, down through the worm and all, that is whiskey!"

She was perfectly willing to answer my questions, and went on to tell me many things.

"A body can run it off in one night after it's boiled, you understand. I have seen a man drink of the singlin's, but it is a tarryin' drunk. I know-ed a man to get drunk that a-way and he stayed drunk all that day and it was still tarryin' the next morning.

"A man that is crafty and is makin' in a big way, he sets some mash here and some there, some today and some a few days after, to have it runnin' off at different times. Mostly, the big barrel you see yonder sunken in the ground is made of oak wood about a inch thick. The mash don't ooze out 'twixt the staves because the sugar, or whatever sweetnin', melts and water oozes out of the chop, and that causes the wood to swell, so there's no cracks 'twixt the staves. In Grandpa's day, and Jonathan's, men made good, pure corn whiskey. It wouldn't harm a babe! They give their mash proper and fit time to work, say seven to fifteen days, dependin' on the nat're of the weather. And they

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used good, clean planks for to make their barrels, covered over the big barrel like you see yonder with a clean piece of bleach, and over that they laid their planks. Kept their mash clean." Martha did not add that they also covered the mash barrel with planks and leaves to hide it from spying eyes.

"We were ever careful to have the biler clean as a hound's tooth. And we kept a slow fire under the biler. A slow fire!" she repeated carefully and emphatically, "so's it could take its naterl time to 'still. But nowadays, scalawags don't keer. They 'still for gold and devilmint!" Martha's eyes kindled. "They don't keer. They use carbide, mind you, that makes light for miners' lamps. They putt that carbide into the brine to hurry it up. They just can't make pizen liquor fast enough!" She took a long breath. "Woman, would you believe it, them scalawags and triflin' hill billies use dirty gasoline drums for to 'still in. They don't use clean wood no more. There's Widder Bailey's man—lived down in the mill town—his stummick was ett out with pizen liquor made with carbide. He got to foolin' around with the small law," Martha said contemptuously. "That's a man that sells hisself for money; that is to say, he buys his job and spies on people makin', then takes hesh money offen them and gits pay for this from t'other side too. Hill billies does such as that. It's mostly a scalawag, like Thornie, afflicted somehow, that takes such a job; one eye out, or mebbe one leg or a arm missin'. And a heap o' times nowadays you'll find men makin', 'stead of goin' on charity. And there are people," her voice fell to a whisper, "that stands 'twixt them and the law. Fact is, you might say such as that is the law, its own self, but I'm not callin' no names."

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Martha sat down on the log beside little Phoebe and the baby, who sat all the while looking on with never a word.

"Woman," she said earnestly, "do you appreciate it is the law, that ain't rightly carried on, that causes good men like Jonathan and Grandpa to be forced to do like they did? Forced, mind you. Time was when Grandpa and Jonathan never snuck around when they were makin'. Why?" she asked, and a bewildered look crept into the great dark eyes, "why shouldn't a man make liquor from his corn, same as bread?"

How often had I heard that same honest argument from the lips of good, honest mountain people. "The land's mine, the crop is mine. Why can't I make whiskey same as bread?" It was the argument of the Whiskey Rebels of 1794, and it has been defended and contested ever since.

"It is the law," Martha said heavily, "and the carryin's on of the law, by them that ain't a spark of honor in their hearts, hill billies that have got above their raisin' that scrouge in on good men like Grandpa and Jonathan and force 'em to ways that 'pear to be dishonest."

For a moment she brooded on her troubles, then, seizing the long fork, she crossed in a fury to the sunken barrel where Jonathan and Grandpa had stirred their mash. She thumped it savagely with strange, sudden strength, till the staves clattered in a heap. She stepped swiftly to the copper-lined boiler. Again and again she beat it with the fork, bringing down heavy ringing blows one after the other till the boiler lay battered and worthless. She turned and battered the thumping keg to splinters, paused and looked at the copper coil. "Can't destroy copper," she said, "but it shall be putt where no hand shall find it. Phoebe," she

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spoke to the little girl for the first time, "come along, with Little Jonathan, and, Woman, you come too."

Along the stony footpath she led the way to the overhanging cliff. I stood at the brink, fearful to enter the dark chasm. But little Phoebe and Jonathan walked on unafraid.

"Come along, Woman!" Martha called over her shoulder as she stepped within its darkness. I could hear the echo of her footsteps in the great cavern. "Come along," she called again sharply over her shoulder, and I obeyed. Hands in front of me I felt my way to where the children stood. I put a hand on Phoebe's small shoulder, reached down and held Little Jonathan's chubby, warm hand. No word was spoken. Then came a strange echo, the sound of a heavy object striking water far, far down in a well. Martha drew near us in the darkness. Her hand trembled on my shoulder. Without a word she led the way back out of the dark cave. A few moments later we blinked in the sunlight under the edge of the overhanging cliff.

"Now let 'em sarch for the coil," Martha's lips quivered, "and them that took Jonathan, them that took Grandpa too, let 'em drap to depths in that bottomless well."

Phoebe gripped her mother's hand hanging limp at her side. Little Jonathan snuggled close, looking up into her face with wide, wondering eyes. The little family trudged slowly back to where the thumping keg and the mash barrel lay in heaps of battered staves and the copper boiler lay battered to destruction.

"We've laid waste everything," said Martha in a calm voice, "everything, same as the law laid waste my family, my men folks. We're through makin', me and mine! It's

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an uneasy way of yearnin' a livin', but now, I'm sartin the good Lord will take keer of me and my helpless little 'uns." Picking up the wood fork to which still clung evidence of sour mash, she handed it to me. "Grandpa aimed for you to have this mash fork," she said. "He named it more than once afore he died. Couldn't speak so's a body could understand, but he p'inted to it last time I were up here with him. He would come," she offered with conscientious wistfulness, "though I knowed he were liable to drap dead in his tracks any minute. He sunk down here on this log 'longside the thumpin' keg and helt the fork in his pore, quiverin' hand, his fingers a-thumpin' palsiedlike on the handle. It fell from his grasp, but he p'inted to it. 'For that woman,' he mumbled. I knowed who he meant. He made the sign like on his ankle j'int—I knowed he meant you. 'For that woman,' he come over it again. Woman—" her voice was steady now, "we confidence you, me and Grandpa. We did then—we do now. You know why we ever kept watch on you. We didn't aim for Thornie to ketch sight of you in our house. He'd a had you warranted to swear agin us, mebbe. It was to save you, Woman—and us."

Slowly we made our way down the mountainside over the stony path, Martha in the lead, Phoebe and Little Jonathan stumbling with small steps at her side, while I followed, forked staff in hand. I was proud of that sign of trust Grandpa had bequeathed to me, the wayfarer who had found friend and comforter at his humble hearth. I still have it.

In the height of prohibition days, when it was daring and intriguing to buy what the outside world calls "moonshine," it fetched as much as twenty dollars a gallon.



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Today a dollar is a high price for a quart of "pizen" liquor. Out of sixty gallons of mash, probably fifty gallons of liquid or brine would be produced. By the time the "singlin's" are run and "doubled back," no more than twenty-five gallons of corn whiskey result. It passes through many hands, sometimes, before it reaches the consumer, and each man who handles it takes his toll, so that the man who actually is "makin'" realizes the least profit of all, and runs the greatest risk with the law and the small law. It is, indeed, an "uneasy way of yearnin' a livin'."

Some fair summer day, when the foot log is not slippery, cross it, turn to the right, and make your way to where Martha and Grandpa and Jonathan once lived. I'm sure Phoebe and Little Jonathan will welcome you. They are both "growed up" and married off. Phoebe lives in the old house, young Jonathan close by. Old Brother Vinton and his wife watched over them to their dyin' day, for Martha, the mother, passed away that same winter after she laid waste what was left of their "makin'."

# 8.

## ROMEO AND JULIET

*Two households, both alike in dignity . . .  
From ancient grudge break to new mutiny . . .  
A pair of star-cross'd lovers . . .*

IN THE MOUNTAINS OF KENTUCKY THE WORD "FEUD" IS in disrepute. There, a vendetta is called "war" or "the troubles," as troublous, indeed, it is. With changing conditions, such outbreaks become less and less probable; that they were ever possible is less attributable to the participants themselves than to the nature of the country in which they lived. Law enforcement was difficult, slow, often ineffective, sometimes impossible. Families had to take upon themselves the responsibility of protecting their lives and their property, and avenging wrongs that had been inflicted upon them.

It is a paradox not to be reconciled by me that a fascination remains in war, in its revelation of strong personalities in unrestrained action. Reports of recurrent outbreaks of vendettas in the mountains of Kentucky were always read with interest elsewhere, like reports of war in any land at any time, but they were indeed troubles, containing all the anguish of war, to the participants, and especially to the women of the families involved, who, though loyal to

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their men folk, intuitively preferred peace and security to the excitement and possible gains of rivalry.

The most famous of all the "wars" was the one between the Hatfields and the McCoys. It is over now. Members of the two families have intermarried; one descendant of the rival leaders was named Randall McCoy Hatfield; direct descendants of both can now sit quietly and discuss the troubles of the past without animosity. Even if a new outbreak should occur, which is not likely, it would become another rivalry, not a revival of the old one. The mountain people have had enough of that sort of thing, and know well the futility of it. The original cause of the animosity between Hatfields and McCoys is not even known, now, nor are the issues of the war clearly defined. Some say that it grew out of, and was in a way an extension of, the Civil War.

Big Sandy country was the scene of many a skirmish during the War between the States, and although both West Virginia and Kentucky remained in the Union, many of their stalwart sons got together a company of neighbors and joined the Confederate forces. One young fellow, Anderson Hatfield, shouldered his musket and joined the "Logan Wildcats," a regiment in which he became a captain. A neighbor, Randall McCoy, joined the Union forces, and though he never rose to commissioned rank, he had the satisfaction of being on the victorious side. The war ended, two tattered and weary soldiers rode back into the wilderness whence they had come, and their paths crossed when they drew near Tug Fork. When two of the opposite side met, a Rebel and a Union soldier, the very sight of the blue and the gray aroused animosity. It was so this day.

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"Anderson," said Randall, the man in blue to the man in gray, "you're actin' uppity. I reckon you think yourself bigger'n me. I ain't carin' nothin' about callin' you 'captain.' I'll have you know me nor mine don't lick nobody's boots. And don't you be forgettin' who won this war. A Johnny captain ain't worth a Union drummer boy. You ain't got no more sand in your craw than me and mine. Now you can putt that in your pipe and smoke it!" Randall dug his knees into the sides of his mule and rode off, and the least that can be said for the encounter is that it effected nothing toward reconciliation.

The nearest railroad was three days' journey away by horseback. High mountain walls and bridgeless streams shut off the Hatfields and McCoys from the outside world. No warring clans of Scotland ever had a wilder, fiercer scene in which to hold their hatred and slay their sworn enemy than had these clans of the southern highlands. They quarreled over real or fancied wrongs, families joined with families; there were tale bearers, traitors, and, to make the story complete, lovers. There was a small schoolhouse on Mate Creek, not far from either house, but neither of the leaders of their clan paid any attention to "book l'arnin'." Neither Devil Anse Hatfield nor Randall McCoy could read or write.

Devil Anse came of a sturdy race. His grandfather, Ephraim Hatfield, back in 1795 had crossed the mountains and settled on Big Sandy. He prospered, was a peace-loving man, tilled the soil, hunted wild game. When he died Ephraim left his lands to his son George, father of Devil Anse, and to his other children, ten in number; Madison, Polly, Ransom, James, Alexis, Johnson (for whom Devil Anse's oldest son, Jonse, was named), Bazell,

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Wallace, Elias, Floyd. The place where the first Hatfield settled is today known as part of Pike County. At the same time, some of Ephraim's brothers and cousins settled in the territory which is now included in Logan County, West Virginia. The Hatfields' descendants are numerous.

The young captain loved hunting above all else in the world. His mother used to say proudly of him, "Anse ain't afeared of the devil. Why, I've knowed him to fight a b'ar with his naked fists. I've seed him ketch a wildcat and squz it to death. And come to takin' aim with his rifle gun, 'pon my honor, I've seed Anse sit right thar on the step-rock, take aim at a wild turkey off yonder on the ridge, drap it! Jest as easy as you'd whistle to a dog. And oncet Anse went huntin' all by his lorn self. Come draggin' in at nightfall a painter! A painter, mind you, nigh as long as hisself when he hung it up head fo'most from the tree yonder. Not afeared of no kind of varmint nor of the devil hisself!" "Devil Anse" the old mother proudly called her son, so apt was he with the gun and so fearless. So Devil Anse he became to neighbor folk far and near.

A young man of twenty-seven when the Civil War ended, and already married, Devil Anse Hatfield built a home on Peter Creek. Tall, more than six feet he stood in sock feet, he was of strong build, his long black hair reached to his shoulders, and he wore a stubby beard. His eyes were black, piercing. With the lands he had before joining the Confederate army, and the acres acquired afterward, by the year 1878, when the Hatfield-McCoy war really started, he was lord over seven thousand acres. Land in those days meant power. And rugged mountain lands and virgin forests meant also protection, safety against intrusion unawares upon the likes of Devil Anse. He farmed some,

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raised hogs and a big family. He was the father of thirteen children, nine boys who grew to manhood, and four girls.

Randall McCoy, who had stopped on the narrow trail over the mountain that day "to give Anse a piece of his mind," as he told afterward, was more than twenty years older than young Hatfield. Randall was a man of strong physique, dark hair, and sullen gray eyes. He built his house on Pond Creek of Blackberry Fork, just a few miles away from Anse at the mouth of Peter Creek.

Devil Anse continued to hunt, proud always of his skill and strength. And the country was aware that he had already made the first notch on his gun, for it was said that he had killed Harmon McCoy in 1863, in one of the skirmishes of the War. Perhaps that was what made Randall McCoy so contentious in 1865.

News passed swiftly by word of mouth, up one creek, down another, so when there was a quarrel, Devil Anse, the leader of his family, always heard of it. He gave commands, the rest obeyed. Hatfields followed their leader to a man. They trusted Devil Anse, relied absolutely upon him. His brother Ellison married a Staton, and they lived on Mate Creek, not far off. When she quarreled with the McCoy's and went to law about it, naturally the Hatfields took sides with her. It was Devil Anse who told them what to do. But that quarrel was disposed of. Another soon followed.

In those days men didn't bother much about keeping up their stock. They had crude pens, however, and split-rail fences here and there marked a boundary line between neighbors. But hogs could root their way out of a pen, and a persistent old sow or a boar had been known to uproot a split-rail fence, so owners took to branding their hogs

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with a hot iron: a brand under the right or left eye; or again, they slit the right or left ear, so as to identify their property. When a man's hogs roved too far, he went into the woods to round them up.

One day in 1878, Floyd Hatfield, living near Stringtown in Pike County, Kentucky, set out to round up his hogs. He had them safely in the pen at last and was leaning over the rail shelling corn into their trough when Randall McCoy rode up. Some of his hogs were missing and he meant to find them. He reined in close to the pen and, leaning from his nag, pointed with his whip, a small switch he had broken from a papaw bush as he rode along the creek, to a fat hog crunching a nubbin of corn.

"Floyd, that thar hog is mine," said Randall McCoy. "It's got two slits in the left ear. That's my brand! And I'm aimin' to get back my property." With that he wheeled about and headed his nag toward Raccoon Hollow where Deacon Hatfield, Floyd's kinsman, was justice of the peace, and made complaint. Having stated the case, he started civil action to get back the hog.

On the day set for the trial many of both factions rode forth for the occasion. With the Hatfields were Chafins (Devil Anse's wife was Levicy Chafin), Mahons, Vances, Farrells, Statons, all kin by blood or marriage to the Hatfields. They forded Tug to reach Raccoon Hollow, which was in Pike County. The McCoy's had with them Normans, Stuarts, Smiths, Colemans, Gateses, Sowardses. They crowded into the blacksmith shop where the trial was to be held, some grumbling in an undertone, others jesting over the affair. The hog had been brought into court too. It grunted and blinked stupidly at the gathering, and nosed around on the dirt floor after an ear of corn someone threw

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down. The justice of the peace, Deacon Hatfield, spat into the forge, then, thumping a horny hand on the anvil, called for order. "Men! Let's get to this trial. Did you ever see this here hog afore?" he asked of Bill Staton, a brother-in-law of Ellison Hatfield.

"Yas," answered Staton, "and to my notion it's Floyd's hog. What's more, I seed it branded under the right eye. See, the brand is still thar in the hog's meat, for all it's covered with gorm. It's Floyd's hog!"

At this Tolbert McCoy, son of Randall, made a rush for Staton, shouting, "That's a lie, Bill Staton, and you know it!"

"Hure now, men," Deacon Hatfield thumped the anvil for order. "I'm wantin' to get to the bottom of this business. Quile down thar, Tolbert, whilst I call for another witness."

With the aid of a couple of deputies Tolbert McCoy and Bill Staton were pried apart and the trial continued.

"Jasper Coleman!" called the court, "did you ever see this hog afore?"

Jasper looked uncertainly now at McCoys, now at Hatfields, lined up around the wall. "Yas, I seed the hog afore," he squinted at the grunting hog. "Hit belongs to Randall McCoy. I taken notice of them thar two slits in the left ear right after Randall cut 'em thar! That's Randall's mark—two slits in the left ear."

The justice of the peace turned to Dave Mahon. "Have you seen the hog afore and who does it belong to, to the best of your knowin' and belief?"

"The hog belongs to Floyd Hatfield," Dave Mahon answered without batting an eye.

"Selkirk McCoy," the court addressed the next witness,



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a gaunt fellow who stood with hands in pockets leaning against the wall.

"Well, sir, bein' as you axed me, the hog belongs to Floyd Hatfield." Selkirk McCoy shrugged his shoulders and looked down at the hog still crunching the ear of corn. With the answer of Selkirk in their favor the Hatfields then and there adopted this McCoy as one of their own. But they felt disgruntled toward Deacon Hatfield, because the verdict finally went to Randall McCoy, giving him the hog with the two slits in the left ear. Randall and his son Tolbert bound the hog with a piece of bark, front and back feet, and carried it squealing from the improvised court room, hung it over the back of their waiting nag and rode home with their property.

Some contend the hog really started the trouble between the Hatfields and McCoys which led to a war that lasted more than a quarter of a century and cost more than a score of lives. But, although undoubtedly there was already bad feeling between the two leaders and their families, others say it was really "a pair of star-crossed lovers," the love of a young Hatfield for a pretty McCoy, that caused the trouble. Jonse Hatfield, eldest son of Devil Anse, loved Rosanna, the daughter of Randall McCoy, whatever he may have done later to the contrary. Much of the story I had from Devil Anse himself, and the look in Jonse's eyes, long years after Rosanna lay in the little burying ground on Tug, even at the mention of her name, makes me know he loved her. Jonse, I am afraid, made a rather poor figure of a Romeo, but in his way, he loved Rosanna.

Two years after the trial which gave Randall McCoy back his hog, there was an election. That was the spring

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of 1880. At sunup, members of both families rode out for the polling place on Blackberry Creek. With Devil Anse Hatfield were Tom Chambers, Mose Christian, his brothers Ellison and Elias Hatfield, and his son, Cap Hatfield, just fourteen years old. At home, Devil Anse had left his wife, Levicy Chafin Hatfield, and two of his daughters, Rosy and Nancy.

But long before the others started, Jonse, the oldest of Devil Anse's boys, eighteen and handsome, was on his way, his wide-brimmed felt set far back on his head, his light-brown hair falling in ringlets over his forehead. Jonse's dark eyes had an alluring light in them and the sound of his voice, his boyish smile, somehow melted the hearts of fair maidens wherever he went. Jonse rode on ahead, singing a love ditty, or again, whistling a gay tune. He was young, it was spring, there'd be pretty girls to say things to to make them "fidget." Jonse delighted to say things to girls to make them fidget. "Can't rest till he gets every new girl he sets eyes on plumb frantic over him," Devil Anse said many a time.

So this bright spring morning Jonse rode forth, thinking, to be sure, of girls, pretty girls, he meant to caress and kiss. On the way he met his great-uncle, Jim Vance, and they tipped the jug. Not that Jonse needed corn whiskey to make him gay or in a loving mood. Jonse was eighteen and handsome.

There were others at the polling place when Jonse and Jim arrived. All the men had rifles, many had a jug of whiskey. They stacked their rifles against trees, mingled, and drank together.

"Who you drinkin' for?" a McCoy asked a Hatfield.

"The winner," answered the Hatfield. And they tipped

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the jug, pulling out the corn-cob stopper, passing the jug from hand to hand.

Randall McCoy, who was all of sixty by this time and the father of a pretty daughter, Rosanna, mingled with the others. His young son, Little Randall, thirteen, in homespun jeans and knitted galluses, felt himself quite a man among them as he sauntered around through the crowd. Many of the women folk were there. Though women had not the slightest interest in politics and voting they went along, for occasions for a gathering were few in the mountains. So women folk made the most of this occasion to visit together, to talk over canning and butter making, weaving and spinning; to exchange with each other quilt patterns and things they had tried for making dyes, various combinations of herbs and juices.

"You, Jonse," one of the older women, shifting a nursing baby from one hip to the other, called out to young Hatfield, "who you courtin' now? Reckon you and Melvinie is on the outs ginst now." "Or is it Sarie?" "Or Mollie?" one after the other teased good naturedly. For everyone knew young Jonse Hatfield and liked him. They all knew Jonse, with his pretty eyes and pleasant way, was fickle. "Courtin' first one then t'other," Devil Anse himself admitted as much smilingly.

"I'm aimin' to look in new pastures," answered Jonse, who by this time was a bit unsteady on his feet, "and if my eyesight serves me right, 'pears like she's comin' right yonder." He braced himself by one hand against a sapling as he leaned forward, his eyes fixed boldly on a pretty girl, scarce out of her teens, with golden curls and blue eyes, who rode into view. She rode behind a young fellow on a bay mare, her arms tight about his waist. Her bonnet, of

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pink calico like her dress, had slipped from her head. Her new store shoes, high-topped and buttoned, did not quite reach to the hem of her frock, leaving much of her bare legs to view. Stockings were expensive in those days and young girls often wore shoes without them.

"Pretty as a posey," grinned young Hatfield, straightening his shoulders as best he could, considering the corn whiskey he had drunk. He stared openly at the girl. "Who is she?" he asked eagerly of a fellow who sauntered by.

"Don't you know a McCoy when you see one?" twitted his informant. "That's Rosanna McCoy!"

"God Almighty!" Jonse hooked his thumbs in his gal-luses to steady himself. "Rosanna McCoy! You are plumb pretty as a posey. I'm bound to have you, Rosanna! I'm just plumb bound to!" he murmured as his eyes swept lustfully the pretty face, the rounded breasts, the pretty plump legs which Rosanna now displayed as she jumped from the nag and the pink calico dress, full skirted, billowed about her. Tolbert McCoy, the brother with whom she rode, led the nag to one side and tied the bridle to a papaw bush, stacked his rifle with the rest, took a nip from his jug of whiskey and hung it on the pommel of his saddle.

From beyond a clump of bushes, Cap Hatfield, Jonse's younger brother, was watching with fascination the progress of Jonse. "Jonse ort not to lust after that pretty girl," Cap thought to himself. "There's plenty of wimmin for him to lay with, let alone a McCoy. He can't stay away from wimmin. Just plumb hog wild when he sets eyes on a pretty one." Jonse, eighteen, handsome and impetuous, made rapid progress with Rosanna, twenty, blue-eyed, pretty, and blushing.

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Before sundown the older men, what with passing their jugs again and again, were gloriously drunk. Some slept heavily under the wide-spreading trees, or crawled into the bushes. Randall McCoy, an old man of sixty, had gone home, and Tolbert, his son, had quite forgotten to look after Rosanna as he had promised their mother. Devil Anse, satisfied that the election was going satisfactorily, had gotten his crowd together and gone his way. Everyone seemed to have forgotten Jonse and Rosanna.

The two had found a secluded spot by a little stream quite hidden from view. With arms entwined about each other they sat, a Hatfield and a McCoy. Once or twice Jonse had left Rosanna's side to make sure there would be no intrusion from any quarter. Each time he came back to report to Rosanna. "Them that ain't plumb drunk and sleepin' around in the bushes has rode off home. I don't see spyin' Cap, even. He's not dry behind the ears yit," Jonse smiled. "Cap don't know no woman yit, Rosanna. He's not old enough yit, jest fourteen. He don't know nothin' what it's like to love a woman—I mean sure enough love her." Jonse's eyes lingered on Rosanna's lovely throat, her tempting lips, her breasts. "We ain't nothin' or no one to be afeared of, Rosanna. I've got to have you," Jonse coaxed. From his place behind a clump of papaw bushes young Cap watched the lovers.

Jonse drew Rosanna close in his arms. Her head with the golden curls lay back upon a mossy pillow. Jonse pressed her closer, his lips met hers. And Rosanna, quite beside herself with love for the handsome lad, "came to her wits" a little while later realizing her weakness, her transgression. "Pa will kill me," she sobbed in Jonse's arms, "or worse yit, he will disown me."

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"Don't be troubled, Rosanna," Jonse patted her cheek, kissed her again and again. "I love you, Rosanna. I swear before God Almighty I love you. You are my woman."

"Jonse," Rosanna looked into his dark eyes, "I'm older'n you, all of two year, and a woman ort not give herself to a man that's younger—"

"What's two year 'twixt them that love each other like me and you, Rosanna? I aim to hold you for my very own. Come along." He lifted her up in his arms, steadied himself against a tree. "You're goin' back to my home! With me, Rosanna."

Levicy, Devil Anse's wife, flung wide the cabin door, holding high above her head a blazing pine stick. In its circle of light she caught the outline of a girl, her hand in Jonse's. "Come in, Rosanna," said Levicy Hatfield in her motherly way, "you can sleep in the bed yonder in the corner with my girls."

The Hatfield girls blinked at their visitor and said, "Howdy, Rosanna. Git in."

"Scrouge over, Rosy," Nancy said to her sister, "and make room for Rosanna. I'm just plumb on the edge of the bed myself."

Jonse, with a lingering look at Rosanna, went into the kitchen. Rosanna unbuttoned her shoes, dropped them under the bed, and climbed under the coverlid with Rosy and Nancy. She unbuttoned her dress after she got in, slipped it off and dropped it on the floor. Jonse's two sisters were asleep again in a few moments, but Rosanna McCoy lay quiet, staring wide-eyed into the darkness, for Levicy Hatfield had carried the candle into the kitchen, where she talked with her son. Rosanna could hear them

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talking, now in an undertone and again their voices trailed off to whispers.

"Ma, I've got to have Rosanna," she could hear Jonse arguing.

"Hesh," said Levicey Hatfield, "the Good Book says 'tis better to wed than to lust, and when you're j'ined in wedlock, Jonse Hatfield, I'm not wantin' it to be with a McCoy. Not that I've ary thing in the world ginst Rosanna. She is plumb pretty as a posey, and fair to look upon, but what will your pa say ginst he comes to know this in the mornin'?"

Presently Levicey spoke again. "Cap's asleep," she lifted her eyes to the loft above the rafters. "He named it to me the minute he got home, about you and Rosanna."

Jonse flashed a swift, guilty look at his mother. "Cap nor no one else ain't no call to go snoopin' around in my business. I'm a man, and if what me and Rosanna's done suits us, I reckon hit'll have to suit the rest."

"Hit'll have to be 'twixt you and your pa in the mornin', son. Whatever your pa says we'll all abide by. Anderson Hatfield never was one to be contraried."

Rosanna McCoy stayed on under the roof of Devil Anse with Jonse, though they were never married. Devil Anse would not consent to his eighteen-year-old son marrying old Randall McCoy's daughter, but since they loved each other he did not object to them living together at his house. It wasn't long, however, until Jonse was looking into other pastures. This time his lustful eye turned upon Mary Stafford, who was also courted by Rosanna's brother, Tolbert McCoy.

"You ain't content, Jonse," Tolbert told young Hatfield

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one day when they met on the road, "with takin' Rosanna and a-breakin' her heart and speerit, you got to go castin' lustful eyes in t'other direction. But I'm warnin' you. You keep your pretty smiles and your kisses for someone else 'stead of Mary Stafford."

Later Tolbert tried to persuade their mother to allow Rosanna to return home.

"Whatever your pa says, Tolbert, I'm willin' for," Sarah McCoy said submissively, "but I ain't one to name it to him."

When Tolbert spoke of Rosanna to his father, old Randall sat silent, brooding. "She's turned agin her own," he said after a long time. "'Pears like she favors the Hatfields to her own people."

The younger girls drew near the fireside where old Randall sat. "It's not that Rosanna has shunned us, pa," young Allifair pleaded for her sister. "Can't you find it in your heart, pa, to forgive her? Her speerit is plumb crushed."

The next day Rosanna's sisters, Allifair, Josephine, and Adelaide, took matters in their own hands and set out to see their sister. They met under a great beech by the roadside, the three sisters on one horse. Rosanna spied them coming down the road, eagerly ran to greet them.

"Pa, does he brood and trouble over me, Allifair? Did he ever ax for me. Did ever he wisht I were back home?" Rosanna begged for a word from her father, but the three sisters looked helplessly at each other.

"Jonse don't love you, Rosanna," Allifair argued. "Can't no livin' woman, no one woman, satisfy Jonse Hatfield. He's wantin' every woman his eyes look upon. Jonse is a lustful man, Rosanna, and you are fair and young."



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"You best come home with us, Rosanna," said Josephine.

"I darsen," said Rosanna, forlorn now. "Pa couldn't bide the sight of me, I'm afeared." And she told her sisters she was going to have a child.

"Pa's bound to tender his heart to you." Allifair was more earnest than ever. "You ain't committed deep-dyed sin, Rosanna, 'cause in your heart you love Jonse, for all he is unworthy. You ain't sinned, nor him nuther, if he will do right by you. The Book says, so I hearn Preacher Garret say, and old Brother Dyke Garret knows Script're, he says 'tis writ that him that taketh his virgin, there is no wrong if the two be j'ined in wedlock."

Rosanna went home. But again Jonse lured her away. Even in the short time she was home, more trouble was brewing. Bud McCoy, a relative of old Randall's, tried to kill Bob Hatfield, Devil Anse's cousin, and when Bob tried to get a warrant for his arrest he failed. There were McCoy's in office as well as Hatfields. Her sisters and mother had kept Rosanna's secret from old Randall. They feared their men folks would waylay Jonse and kill him, and that would only add to Rosanna's grief and sorrow. In the meantime, Jonse was casting lustful eyes in pastures new. This time he was openly courting Nancy McCoy, pretty, high tempered, quick tongued. And Rosanna was fading day by day. "I can't 'bide it here no more," she confided to the motherly Levicy Hatfield. 'Pears like bein' like I am, I crave to be among my own. I'm goin' to Aunt Betty McCoy's. She'll take me in."

"No matter where you go, Rosanna, it won't ease your heart none. You love Jonse, and in his way he loves you, Rosanna. But Jonse ain't natured to love just one woman.

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It takes a heap o' women to satisfy my boy. Hit's his curse. He can't help hisself. You had as well stay here with us, Rosanna, and content yourself with what love Jonse gives you. He don't aim to be unkind to you. He can't help bein' natured like he is."

But Rosanna, carrying her shoes to save them from the muddy road, set out for her Aunt Betty McCoy's, at Stringtown. The girl found a welcome with Aunt Betty, who tried every way to keep her pacified and contented.

"You are deservin' of a heap o' things that's pretty and nice, and you're deservin' of all of Jonse Hatfield's love. He ain't no call to forsake you and run after other wimmin."

"Don't fault Jonse—" The girl burst into tears. "He can't help hisself bein' natured like he is."

After that, whenever Jonse came riding up the road, Aunt Betty McCoy didn't interfere when he tossed his bridle over a picket of the fence and came in to talk a spell with Rosanna. One night he lingered too long. Rosanna's brothers, Tolbert, Phemar, and Little Randall, rode up. The moon was hidden behind dark clouds so that Jonse didn't see the men coming. They tethered their horses a distance from the house and crept up stealthily toward the stoop where Rosanna and Jonse were talking. Before Jonse was aware of them they had seized him, tied his hands behind him, and hurried him away to the waiting horses, leaving Rosanna like a figure of stone, hands helpless at her sides. Her youngest brother, Randall, snatched the bridle of Jonse's horse from the picket and led it swiftly behind his own galloping nag.

"Aunt Betty—!" Rosanna cried, stumbling into the house, "they've took Jonse!"

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The old woman straightened up in bed. "This ain't no time to sit there a-clinchin' your hands and sobbin'. You've got to go tell Anse! Git a nag and ride like you never rid afore in all your born days, Rosanna."

Half wild with fear, Rosanna McCoy rode down the creek-bed road. When she fell breathless in Levicy's arms, Devil Anse snatched his gun from the wall hooks, shouted for Cap, for Elias, for Ellison, and furiously they rode off, gathering their clan as they went. Uncle Jim Vance headed one group, Devil Anse the other. "You take your men and cut across to Pikeville road!" commanded Devil Anse. "And you, Cap, Ellison, Elias, Tom Chambers, come along with me!"

In the meantime Levicy Hatfield with motherly tenderness had turned to look after Rosanna. "You're liable to lose your babe, a-ridin' like this. You ain't to say strong built nohow. There, now," she unbuttoned Rosanna's dress, for the girl's hands were trembling and cold, "you git into bed thar, hure in this corner in my bed. No need gittin' Rosy and Nancy stirred up in the nighttime." But Jonse's sisters in their bed across the narrow dog-trot of the double-crib cabin were already wide-eyed. They sat up, hands clasped about their knees. "It's Jonse agin," they said. "We best quile down," said Nancy, "and let ma and pore Rosanna worry along together."

Rosanna wept bitterly. "Jonse will think allus that I betrayed him. I know, Levicy, I know from the look in his eyes when Phemar and Tolbert and Randall ketched him from the back. But they tuck him off, hands bound behint him, and never oncet did he turn to look back at me. He thinks I done it, Levicy."

"We'll make him know different, me and Anse. You

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seen how proud Anse were of you tonight when you fetched the word. Anse and me won't never forsake you, Rosanna McCoy. Nothin' can't never turn us agin you."

Along the road that crossed a rocky ridge rode a group of horsemen, jeering and taunting the hatless one in their midst who sat his saddle easily for all his hands were bound behind him.

"You'll steal off Rosanna, will you?" taunted Tolbert McCoy. Phemar, his brother, and Little Randall laughed mockingly.

"Jonse, we've got you this time," said Phemar.

"And we aim to make you toe the mark!" scoffed Little Randall.

But Jonse Hatfield offered no retort. That was what the McCoys wanted. Not even when Old Randall looked back over his shoulder and scoffed, "Jonse, you over-re'ched yourself this time. You'd ort to a-stayed away from Rosanna when she left you. We warned you."

"We'll larn you a lesson," jeered Tolbert.

Phemar nosed his horse closer to Jonse and poked him in the ribs with his elbow. "Pretty Jonse—we'll soon make a sorry sight of you, if you give us any back talk."

Jonse Hatfield kept silent, his thoughts on Rosanna. He was seething with anger and plans for revenge. She had betrayed him into the hands of her brothers. Jonse was certain of it. He's never forgive her. He'd crush the heart of her if ever he lived through this night. Jonse's dark brooding was suddenly cut short, for, riding swiftly toward them came a galloping horseman, gun held high above the head of his nag.

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Devil Anse Hatfield halted not an arm's length from Old Randall McCoy.

"What you think you're a-doin', Ran'l?" Devil Anse lowered his gun to the level of his enemy's heart, and fifteen of the Hatfield clan closed about their leader. Fifteen more closed in behind Tolbert, Phemar and Little Randall. "Untie Jonse's hands!" commanded Devil Anse, "and be spry about it!" Rosanna's brothers obeyed swiftly.

"And whar's Jonse's hat?" Devil Anse meant that his son should ride like a man along the mountain road. Little Randall McCoy produced the hat from the horn of his own saddle.

"Dust it off!" commanded Devil Anse, never shifting his gun, while the Hatfield clan, all of thirty strong, kept their guns on the other McCoys. Without a word Jonse sat in his saddle, took the proffered hat from the hands of Little Randall, put it on.

"And now you take your hanksher," Devil Anse shifted his eyes to Tolbert, "and rub the dirt offen Jonse's boots!"

The McCoys straightened in their saddles. But what with Devil Anse's gun level with Old Randall's heart, and the guns of the Hatfields, thirty strong, aimed at the McCoys from all sides, Tolbert did as he was told.

"And now, Ran'l!" Devil Anse, gun in hand, the other gripping his bridle, gave orders: "You turn your nag's nose back to where you come from. And from now on you let me and mine alone—let my boy be! Hear me, and there won't be any trouble."

After that there were times when Jonse seemed reconciled to Rosanna, trusted and believed that she was innocent of his betrayal to her brothers, what with the word

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of Devil Anse and Levicy. But soon Jonse was again courtin' other wimmin; the night Rosanna's baby was born, Jonse was off "galavantin' with a harlot," Devil Anse complained, and Rosanna faded day by day.

"Hit's not lung consumption," old Aunt Betty McCoy and granny women along the creek declared. "Hit's because Rosanna is pinin' in her heart for the love of Jonse Hatfield. And look how her babe is witherin'."

Word of Rosanna's failing health reached the McCoy's, and one day young Calvin, her younger brother, rode down Peter Creek to persuade her to go home.

"Oncet I snuck back from Aunt Betty's, unbeknownst to Jonse," Rosanna explained, "and seemed like I could a-bore hit a heap easier if pa had a-flogged me, as for to see him sittin' thar lookin' so sorryful like at me. Sayin' nary word.

"I'm goin' to die, Calvin, because I want to die. I can't lay under all this no longer. We're both goin' to die, me and the baby."

"Rosanna!" cried Calvin, "you wouldn't kill yourself?"

"No," Rosanna answered. "McCoy wimmin folks ain't chicken livered, like that pore Lorie Wilton that killed herself in Tug, and pore Molly Burton that dove to her death offen Castle Rock. I've done brought misery enough on Randall McCoy, on account of lovin' Jonse Hatfield with all my heart and speerit. But, Calvin, I'm goin' to die because I want to." Before she could say more, Rosanna saw Jonse riding over the ridge. At her pleading, fearful glance, Calvin turned his nag and rode back home, alone.

That fall Rosanna's baby died, and a few months later she herself was dead. After her death Jonse vowed he was

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through with whiskey and women. But it wasn't long till he married Nancy McCoy, a cousin of Rosanna's, whom he had been courting even before Rosanna's baby was born. Nancy even declared that she and Jonse had been secretly married before Rosanna's death, and many believed it. "He done it to spite Rosanna," Nancy loved to boast; "he tantalized that pore girl plumb out of her wits. But Jonse Hatfield won't never get the best of me." Nancy jowered from daylight till dark. Often Jonse left the house altogether to escape her tongue.

Neighbors quarreled with neighbors, and it followed as the day the night, when any quarrel or trouble arose, kin stood with kin, like the clans of Scotland. Captain Anderson Hatfield could boast of the blood of Scots in his veins, though he had kin in Hatfield, England, and Durham, too. So stick together the Hatfields did, through thick and thin, with the ferocity of the warring clans of Scotland. And like their ancestors across the sea, they loved the wild ruggedness of the country, loved the deep forests and cliffs, loved to hunt.

One morning Bill Staton, brother-in-law of Ellison Hatfield, went out hunting for squirrels, tramping the hills that sloped upward from Tug. On the same day two of the McCoys also went hunting for squirrels, Sam and Paris, brothers, each with a gun over his shoulder, trudging the same hills. Bill Staton heard the crackling of twigs, certain that the sound was not caused by the small, scampering feet of squirrels, and a moment later his fears were confirmed as he looked into the barrels of two guns leveled at his chest. Turning his disadvantage to his own account, Staton leaped toward his enemies, with his own gun

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knocked theirs from their grasp, and began to strike powerful blows upon their heads. He got Paris down and bit his hands till they spurted blood. He slugged Sam with another blow that stunned him, then almost bit his ear off. While the two were still pounding each other, Paris staggered to his feet, picked up his gun and fired, but in his effort to avoid hitting his brother, his bullets went wild altogether, missing Bill as well. Finally Sam got to his feet, stumbled to his gun, bleeding and torn as he was by the powerful fists, and teeth, of Staton, braced himself against a tree, and fired. Bill Staton fell to the earth.

The two brothers hid out in the woods for some time. Not until the finding of Staton's body, some days after he had gone hunting never to return, was the absence of the McCoys noticed. Then suspicion naturally turned at once to them. Val Hatfield, a justice of the peace, issued a summons, and Ellison Hatfield was commissioned a deputy to bring in the brothers, dead or alive.

After a day of cautious stalking in the woods he found a cave in which to take shelter at nightfall. The rock-lined ravine was safe. He had explored it before dusk to make sure there was no one crouching there. He lighted a fire of sticks and leaves back under the overhanging rock and sat, gun upon knees, a pistol in his belt, in a night-long vigil. The fire kept him awake. He had built it more for that purpose than for warmth, for Ellison didn't aim to run the risk of falling asleep and giving the McCoys a chance to kill him in cold blood. The next morning he crept cautiously to the rim of his cave. And there, only a few feet away, he spied the figure of Paris McCoy, half crouching, creeping cautiously through the bushes. Seeing that he was discovered, Paris tried to run, stumbled, and



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his gun fell from his hands. Ellison Hatfield leaped forward and made him his prisoner.

Paris was enraged and swore that he had not killed Bill Staton, that he had seen the whole fight and that it was Sam, his brother, who had done the actual killing. Paris even offered to tell Ellison just about where he could find Sam, if the deputy would free him. At length, using Paris as hostage, an arrangement was made to bring both brothers to trial. In summary proceedings, Paris accused Sam, and Sam accused Paris, but finally the evidence showed that Sam McCoy had killed Staton. He was delivered to Val Hatfield, the justice of the peace, who ordered four deputies to confine him in jail. However, in the ultimate trial, Sam McCoy was acquitted on grounds of self-defense, and ready to pick up his gun once more.

At the time of the elections of August, 1882, Ellison and Elias Hatfield rode to the polling place on Blackberry Creek, where two years before young Jonse had met and loved and carried away pretty Rosanna McCoy. Already Ellison had incurred disfavor with the McCoy's for trying to punish Paris and Sam for the killing of Staton. On the way, the brothers caught up with Mary Stafford, with whom young Jonse had also flirted a couple of years before and of whom Tolbert McCoy had been jealous.

"Come along!" Ellison invited, as they overtook Mary. And Mary needed no urging.

"You, Elias," she twitted Ellison's brother, "git outten the wrong side of the bed this mornin'? You ain't so much as give me a smile."

"I'm just a-studyin'," Elias answered indifferently and clapping the bridle on the neck of his nag, rode on ahead.

It had been the plan of Devil Anse that the brothers,

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Ellison and Elias, should go to the polling place at Blackberry Creek, while he and his family stayed at Peter Creek for their own county election.

By the time Ellison and Elias, with Mary Stafford, arrived at their destination, old Randall McCoy was already there, as well as his sons, Tolbert, Phemar and Little Randall. They all spoke casually to each other, but Tolbert leered at Ellison, who had his hand on Mary's shoulder, remembering how Jonse Hatfield had flirted with the woman to tantalize him. Mary was vain over her conquests. McCoy's and Hatfield's tipped the jug and Tolbert took a long swig. Then, replacing the corn-cob stopper and wiping his mouth with the back of his hand, he swaggered up to Elias.

"Elias," he drawled, setting down his jug, "when do you aim to pay me that dollar and seventy-five cents I loaned you a spell back?"

Elias Hatfield turned in amazement. "Why, Tolbert, I paid that back to you three year ago and you know it."

"That's a p'int-blank lie!" Tolbert wanted to fight.

"Mind your tongue!" warned Elias. "I'm hell on two feet when I git started!"

Then Tolbert struck Elias and knocked him sprawling on the ground. Ellison leaped at Tolbert, threw his head backward and tried to break his neck. Distorted though his body was, Tolbert pulled his knife and stabbed Ellison, who, bleeding and moaning in agony, still gripped Tolbert until the latter's younger brother, Little Randall, fifteen years old, rushed at Ellison and thrust his knife into his side again and again. He drew forth the blade dripping with Hatfield's blood and swaggered off to one side. At the sight of blood and the moans and curses of the struggling

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men, Mary Stafford took to her heels. The rest of the on-lookers fell back in horror.

As Elias tried to separate Tolbert McCoy and Ellison, Floyd, another of the McCoy's, drew his knife and advanced on him. About this time, Matthew Hatfield, a constable, fired several shots into the air, but the fight continued without abating while Matthew took a revolver in each hand and fired till there wasn't a bullet left in either gun. But Floyd McCoy didn't know that, and when Matthew commanded: "Drop your knife, Floyd!" he obeyed and looked into the barrel of an empty gun!

When Mary Stafford ran terrified from the scene she bumped into Joe Hatfield, another constable. "For God-A'mighty's sake!" she screamed, "Tolbert and Little Randall and Floyd has stobbed the guts plumb out of Ellison Hatfield!" she caught her breath, "and Matthew is tryin' to blow the brains out of all of 'em. For God-A'mighty's sake, hurry!"

Joe Hatfield plunged into the fray and disarmed Tolbert and Phemar McCoy. On the ground lay Ellison Hatfield in a pool of blood, gasping for breath. Little Randall was seen taking to the bushes, but Elias hurried after him and brought him back. Then he turned to Ellison, who looked up at him. "Anse had ort to be here," Elias said.

"What shall we do?" asked Matthew.

Elias answered quickly. "You, Matthew, I'll keep guard here and you go get your horse and go tell Anse. He's on Peter Creek!" Matthew rode off at a lively clip and Elias knelt beside his brother.

"They've kilt me, Elias," Ellison murmured.

"Don't you worry," Elias reassured him, "we've got the McCoy's. Joe's guardin' 'em yonder—can you see?" But

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Ellison's eyes were covered with blood that streamed from his forehead. The McCoys had stabbed him more than a score of times.

"Where's Anse?" Ellison gasped feebly.

"We've sent for him," again Elias assured his brother. "He'll be here tirectly. Matthew's gone for Anse. Don't worry, Ellison. Just quile down. Anse is comin'."

"Hit's gittin' plumb dark—" Ellison murmured, "—and Anse ain't come yit—where's Anse?" he pleaded feebly.

They did not know then what had delayed Devil Anse; they could not know that Matthew's horse had fallen and broken a leg and that he had had to go on foot the rest of the weary miles to fetch the leader of the Hatfield clan. Weary and breathless, Matthew finally stumbled up the slope to the cabin and Devil Anse, seeing his haste, rushed out to meet him.

"What's the trouble?" Devil Anse's eyes blazed. "There's trouble somewhars—I know it!"

"Ellison's stobbed—plumb to death, I'm afeared. But we're holdin' the McCoys, Old Ran'll's boys, prisoners," gasped Matthew, who had run all of the last mile.

Swiftly Devil Anse called his clan together. Some of them were still lingering at the polling place on Peter Creek, and those who had gone home soon got the word and returned. Together they galloped off to the scene of the trouble, Matthew returning with them on a fresh horse. Forty-two of his kin and followers rode with the leader of the Hatfields, for the word passed swiftly along the creek in the grapevine fashion of the mountains. "Ellison Hatfield's stobbed!" they muttered one to the other, and the word echoed along the creeks, through the hollows: "Ellison Hatfield's stobbed!"

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The word was being carried, too, along other creeks. Mary Stafford kept going after reporting to Joe Hatfield, spreading the news as she went. Mary Stafford was already looked upon as a spy by the McCoys. Had she not flirted with Jonse and Tolbert at the same time? Had she not ridden to the polling place this very day with two Hatfields, Ellison and Elias? Now she carried the word of the trouble: "Ellison Hatfield's stobbed!" she said to whoever she met on the road: "Stobbed! And bleedin' like a stuck hog! Nigh the schoolhouse on Blackberry Creek!"

When Devil Anse arrived on the scene he tossed the bridle of his nag to "Cotton Top" Mounts, one of his followers, and knelt down beside his dying brother. With steady fingers he pulled back the bleeding man's shirt. "God-A'mighty, Ellison," he muttered, "the McCoys have stobbed you aplenty! And for every stob I aim to ax a life, if you don't revive up after this!" He took off his coat, rolled it up, and placed it under Ellison's head. Then wiping the blood from his brother's lips with a grimy handkerchief, he whispered encouragingly, "Ellison, you've got to pull through, but if you don't, I ain't sayin' what mought happen to the McCoys." Then Devil Anse arose and called to his followers. "Men! take the kiverlid," he removed it from under his saddle, "and make a slide quick and pack Ellison to Anderson Farrell's house."

Grimly, swiftly, they toiled. Cutting two strong saplings they tied the quilt to the poles at four corners. Tenderly they lifted the dying Ellison to the improvised stretcher and bore him off toward Warm Hollow. This was across Tug, near where the three McCoy brothers were to die later.

As the Hatfields bore Ellison away, Devil Anse turned

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to Joe Hatfield, the constable. "Where wuz you aimin' to take the McCoys?"

"To Pikeville," Joe answered.

Devil Anse's eyes followed for a moment the group bearing away the dying Ellison. "I'm takin' charge of the McCoys," he said resolutely, "and I aim to hold 'em till we see how Ellison comes out."

The three, Tolbert, Phemar, and Little Randall, stood with their hands tied behind them, under guard of Joe, Matthew, and several others. Devil Anse, with jaws set, surveyed them with a cold, sure eye.

Old Randall McCoy, one hand atop the other gripping the barrel of his gun, spoke quietly. "Boys," he said to his sons, "keep quiet, don't make no back talk. I'm goin' to Pikeville to git a lawyer to defend you." He turned to Devil Anse. "I take it you aim to fetch my boys, prisoners, to the county seat to stand trial, if Ellison dies?"

Devil Anse made answer with a cold stare.

Old Randall rode off.

Scarcely had he turned the bend in the road until Devil Anse motioned a group of his men to draw closer. More than a score remained on the scene; the rest had gone with Ellison to Warm Hollow. There was a murmured conference.

Old Randall had gone, so he said, to get a lawyer to defend his boys, but Devil Anse had another notion about it. "Ran'l's went to round up his crew," the leader said to Val Hatfield, "and I don't aim to let these boys out from under guard, not for nary second, till we see how Ellison comes out." There was more whispering. "We'll not hold Floyd McCoy," Devil Anse decided, "on account he dropped his knife afore he stobbed Ellison. Chicken-

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livered petticoat, that's what Floyd McCoy is. Look at him, standin' off yonder, not guts enough to break and run to the woods. Didn't know he was starin' into the bar'l of a empty gun. Nohow, we'll put these three, Phe-mar, Tolbert, and Little Randall, where they won't cause no trouble." He gave a meaning nod to Val Hatfield and Cotton Top Mounts, who would have turned his own gun upon himself had Devil Anse commanded.

With their leader riding before them, the clansmen closed in around the three McCoy brothers, who had been placed each on a horse in front of an armed guard. Seeing the direction in which they were headed, Tolbert ventured to speak. "You're not takin' us to Pikeville. Where?"

"We'll return you to Pikeville!" snapped Devil Anse, "if you act pretty and don't try to escape."

They rode on, saying little even to each other, the McCoy brothers keeping a stoic silence. They forded Tug and proceeded to a rarely used schoolhouse on Mate Creek. Here they bound the three McCoy brothers, hand and foot, and stood them against the wall. Standing guard over them were Val Hatfield, Selkirk McCoy, who had been ostracized by the McCoy brothers ever since the trial over the hog, when he had testified in favor of the Hatfields; Alex Messer, Joseph Murphy, Doc Mayhorn, Lark Varne, Dan Whitt, Cotton Top Mounts, Charlie Carpenter, and others.

Devil Anse stood before the prisoners. "If Ellison dies, you die!" he said in a low, steady voice. "And now, men," his eyes shifted to the guards, "I'm ridin' off to see how Ellison is gettin' on."

In the meantime the word had reached Pond Creek, where Randall McCoy lived. Sarah McCoy, his wife, was

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stooping over the stove, stirring fried potatoes, when Tolbert's wife rushed in. "Sarie, come quick!" she screamed, "Tolbert, Phemar, and Little Randall has stobbed Ellison Hatfield! And they're helt prisoners in the schoolhouse on Mate Creek." Sarah dropped the spoon with which she was stirring the potatoes and turned to her younger son, Calvin. "Mind the 'taters and the youngins and the house, whilst I strike out to sarch for your pa—he's nigh Logan somewhars, said somethin' about swappin' a nag—"

A heavy downpour of rain made the road a sea of mud, so that her horse slipped and stumbled again and again, but the frantic mother urged it on. When she reached the shack of a schoolhouse, she saw Cotton Top Mounts sitting on the doorstep, gun across his knees. Beside him stood Elias Hatfield with a gun in his hand, a pistol in his belt. Val Hatfield was standing behind the two inside the door. Sarah could see the heads of others inside the schoolhouse. She jumped from the saddle and rushed up to the door, but the guard halted her.

"Are my boys here?" she asked fearfully.

"They are," answered Val.

"Could I see 'em?" begged the mother. "I just want to see my boys—afore you—" There was apprehension in her trembling voice.

"No harm for their mammy to say howdy to her boys, I reckon," scoffed Cotton Top Mounts, and they made way for Sarah to enter the schoolhouse. At the sight of her three boys bound like cattle ready for slaughter, she lifted her apron to cover her face and sobbed pitiably.

"Ma," said Little Randall, "don't take on that way. Don't give 'em the satisfaction o' seein' your misery."

The mother tried to speak, but the words choked in her



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throat and she stumbled out of the room, past the jeering Cotton Top, past Elias and Val. She tottered toward a log and sank there, face cupped in the vice of her hands. Only a moment was she there when a rider came dashing up the road, his horse mud-spattered, nostrils distended. Behind him followed quickly Jonse Hatfield and his brother Cap.

"Ellison is dead!" the fellow gasped.

By this time Jonse and Cap were at his side. They jumped from their horses and made toward the door of the schoolhouse. They did not enter, but waited until Devil Anse arrived, for already he had turned the bend and was galloping up the muddy road at full speed. He tossed his bridle over the saddle horn and slid to the ground.

"Ellison is dead," he said stoically. "Now, we'll take the prisoners—"

Val Hatfield, Alex Messer and Cotton Top Mounts dashed into the schoolhouse where the three McCoy brothers, still bound, stared at them helplessly. They had heard the voice of Devil Anse.

At the sight of her three boys being rushed past her to waiting horses, Sarah McCoy sank to her knees before Devil Anse. "For God's sake, Anse," she pleaded wildly, "spare my boys! Oh, spare them, let them stand trial—"

"Don't beg no Hatfield for mercy, ma," Little Randall, who had been lifted to a saddle, his back to the rider, hands still bound behind him, looked down upon his mother. "Git up offen your knees, ma," he said bravely, "I'd ruther to die as to see you humble yourself afore a Hatfield!"

"This ain't no place for wimmin folks," said Devil Anse.

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He flashed a look at Val, Cap, Jonse, Cotton Top, Selkirk McCoy. They rode off toward Tug, the prisoners hemmed in by an escort of some twenty-three guards. Sarah McCoy did not ride after them. She knew that defiance of Devil Anse's word would mean instant death for her boys. She pulled herself to her feet, stumbled to her nag, and rode back to give the word to Calvin and the rest. He would have to ride on to find his father.

"Where you takin' us?" Tolbert McCoy ventured to ask at last.

"Back to Kentucky," answered Cotton Top.

"For trial?" asked Little Randall, eagerly.

"Wait and see," taunted Cotton Top.

Devil Anse rode on ahead in silence. They forded Tug and when they stood on Kentucky soil the Hatfields held a whispered argument. Devil Anse muttered something and shook his head. There was more muttering and quiet argument. They were now about three hundred yards from Tug. Alex Messer asked, "Where is Val?"

"He turned off back yonder. He's gone to Logan," someone answered.

Cotton Top and Alex Messer untied the prisoners one at a time. Without words they took Tolbert first and bound him to a papaw bush. The blood drained from his face. He lifted his eyes to the hills; fearful and wide they swept the canopy of heaven as if searching for help. But no word escaped his blanched, parted lips. Then Phemar: his hat had been lost on the ride, his dark-brown hair lay damp upon his forehead. His face was colorless, his eyes wide, unseeing. Little Randall, just fifteen, and the small-

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est of the three, was bound last. The brothers did not speak, nor did they look one toward the other.

Cotton Top tipped a jug of whiskey to his lips and tauntingly invited the three brothers to have a drink. Tolbert, Phemar and Little Randall uttered no word. Cotton Top put down the jug, picked up his gun, looked at Devil Anse. The others lifted their guns, leveled them at the McCoy's.

Little Randall saw his brothers shot to death. Saw their bound bodies slump to the earth, heads drooping upon their breasts. Still he did not cry out in fear.

"Beg!" jeered the half-drunk Cotton Top. "Beg, Little Randall, and we'll spare your life!"

But Little Randall McCoy lifted his young head proudly and hurled back defiantly at his tormentors: "Go to hell!"

Guns answered the lad's defiant cry. He slumped lifeless beside his slain brothers.

Old Randall McCoy and his son Calvin reached the scene too late. The three brothers lay dead in pools of blood. The Hatfields had gone.

At the inquest later that day, Tolbert's wife, who had carried the word of the capture of Phemar, Tolbert and Little Randall to Sarah, was present. Joe and Matthew Hatfield, officers of the law, were also there.

"'Pears to have been some killin' goin' on—" drawled the coroner.

Brief formalities of the law ended, the bodies were turned over to the father. After they had buried their dead the McCoy's huddled together about the hearth.

"Pa," young Calvin argued, seething with anger, "we ain't no call to lay under all this."

"Let the law take its course," answered old Randall

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McCoy. "My house is nigh destroyed. Three of my boys took at once. Rosanna and her pore babe gone. Just me and you and Jim left of the men folks here, Calvin. We're a-bound to take keer of your ma and the wimmin folks and Tolbert's boy. We'll wait the course of the law," he said with finality.

Old Randall went next day to the county seat to see what could be done about the slaying of his boys. Over his shoulder he carried a rifle, in his belt a pistol. "I'm plumb sorely tried," he said to the lawyer, "waitin' for jestic. I'm here to get six foot of devil and a hundred and eighty pound o' hell! You know who I mean without callin' no names."

The lawyer offered suggestions, and old Randall, half pacified, decided to follow the course directed.

Calvin had been brooding endlessly over the killing of his brothers. "I'd not grumble, ma," he said to Sarah, "I'd not raise a word iffen they'd a-give Little Randall a chanct. Pore little feller, him so proud." Seizing the gun that lay in the wall hooks over the mantle shelf he cried out: "To hell with the Hatfields! I aim to kill the last one of 'em in this whole country!"

Sarah calmed him, but when old Randall came back that night, and young Calvin was sleeping, she told what had happened. "'Pears like, Ran'l," the wife said, "we'd ort to have some rights in this world."

"Mebbe the governor'll do something. He'd ort to," answered the father of the slain boys. "I'll talk to some of the law at the county seat in a day or so."

Governor Knott of Kentucky issued summonses for twenty-three members of the Hatfield clan indicted for the murder of Tolbert, Phemar and Little Randall McCoy. He

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forwarded the papers to Governor Jacob B. Jackson at Charleston, West Virginia. The papers were forgotten.

The McCoys were angered. By this time there were political leaders among them and that was something to be reckoned with. So to pacify them, to retain their vote, Governor Knott offered a reward of five hundred dollars for Devil Anse, dead or alive. The printed notice of the reward, with a full description of Devil Anse, was posted on all the highways, in post offices, and other public places. When Devil Anse heard this he called together fifty of his clan.

"No one shall take you, Pap!" Cap, the second son, reassured his father.

Devil Anse stroked his long beard, and his keen black eyes swept the mountainside, surveyed the creek, the road. "Boys," he spoke at last, "I aim to set a guard around this place. Half of you fellows keepin' watch by day, t'other half at night. And I aim you shall cut down all the trees on the top of the ridge yonder," indicating the highest peak behind the house. "And what's more, we'll build a drawbridge spannin' the creek right in front of the place here, so's no one can cross without we first make sartin who they are—then we'll let down the bridge!"

Murmurs of proud approval rippled over the gathering assembled under the roof of Devil Anse. That very day they set to work. Huge beams were bolted together that safely spanned the creek, strong crosspieces nailed fast, and great chains that lifted the bridge and lowered it. The bridge was kept up safely on Devil Anse's side of the creek, and guards stood there day and night. The house of the Hatfield leader was two stories high and weatherboarded. There was a double porch in front of the door, but not

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extending the length of the place. It was the type of house familiar in Civil War days; identical, incidentally, with that in Pikeville which once served as General Garfield's headquarters.

There were rumors again and again that officers were seen prowling in the woods in the vicinity of Devil Anse's place, but so well was it guarded, the sleuths did not get near enough to seize the leader and claim the reward. The Hatfields, some fifty strong, kept their eyes open, and their ears to the ground, for news traveled then, and still does, by word of mouth in the southern highlands.

Devil Anse got word that his son Jonse's sister-in-law, wife of Bill Daniels, was a spy; that she was carrying into the McCoy camp things that went on and things that were said among the Hatfields.

"I'll tell you what we ort to do with that triflin' critter, Devil Anse," said Tom Wallace, who worked for Cap Hatfield on his farm. "We'd ort to maul the everlastin' daylight outten her." Tom had a streak of reddish brown through his black hair that gave him a strange look at first glimpse, but those who knew him were quite accustomed to the unusual marking of his foretop. "Well, fellers, we'd ort to flog that McCoy critter. A good sound peltin' would do her good. And what's more," he added with a chuckle, "it might be a lesson to her sister Nancy, for the way she is ever jowerin' at Jonse."

Devil Anse nodded silent approval, and further plans were made for the beating of Jonse's sister-in-law. The next day passers-by noticed that the Hatfields had slaughtered a cow. "The heifer was givin' bloody milk," Devil Anse observed casually. One night late in the fall of 1886, a

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number of Hatfields, Tom Wallace among them, descended upon Bill Daniels' house.

"Hallo!" shouted Tom Wallace.

"Hallo!" came the answer and the door opened wide, but it wasn't Bill Daniels who stood on the threshold. It was Bill's wife, the suspected spy. Before she was aware of what was going on they seized her and dragged her into the foreyard. One of the men drew from under his coat a whip. A whip not of plaited bark, but of leather, made of a long cow's tail! So unmercifully did they beat the alleged spy, lashing her across the face, the abdomen and back, that the woman died. "Spare me, my God, men, spare me!" she shrieked in pain. But the lash only fell the heavier on the defenseless creature. Nor did they stop when she fell limp to the ground, but rushed into the house, where they found her aged mother and beat her so that she was a helpless cripple from that day on. The men had carefully chosen a night when they knew Bill Daniels was away from home.

When the McCoys heard of this they sent out word that they would give "cash money and plenty of it" for the scalp of Tom Wallace. For the old woman, when she regained consciousness, declared it was Wallace who had beaten her daughter to death and crippled her for life. "I seen Tom Wallace pelt my girl with the cow's tail agin and agin, his hat fell off and I ketched sight of his reddish-brown streak in that black head of his'n. I knowed it were Tom Wallace that done the meanness. And I hear-ed my pore girl beg for mercy. No one in this whole country has got a head of harr like Tom Wallace, with that thar reddish-brown streak through the top, t'other harr of his

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head black as a crow's wing. I seen him with my own eyes," declared the old woman.

When the McCoys got word of the death of Nancy's sister, they struck out to find Tom Wallace at Cap's house, choosing a time when Devil Anse's son was not at home.

"Come out and show yourself, Tom Wallace!" Jeff McCoy, Nancy's brother, shouted. "We know you're in there."

"Best come on out," Joe Hurley, Jeff's companion, yelled, at the same time firing at the door.

Cap's wife, who was sick in bed, called out feebly, "I tell you, men, Tom's not here, nor Cap nuther." The McCoys kept pouring bullets into the house, but the walls were thick, and the door too, and so none of the shot struck Tom, crouching in the chimney corner, nor Cap's wife, who lay in the bed. The McCoys continued to pour bullets into the house until their ammunition was gone, and then they went away.

That evening when Cap came home, his wife told him what had happened and he flew into a rage. "If they'd a teched a harr of your head," Cap raged, "I'd kill Jeff McCoy afore he could beg for mercy!"

"Don't harm Jeff," the sick woman pleaded. "He's not hurt me nor Tom nuther. See for yourself," she waved a feeble hand toward the hired man still huddled in the corner. "Don't go nigh Jeff McCoy," Cap's wife pleaded, "it will only start trouble again." Cap made no reply. He bided his time.

In the meantime things were growing worse between Jonse and his wife, Nancy McCoy. They lived on Lick Fork of Peter Creek, not far from Devil Anse.

"Jonse, you knowed about what Tom Wallace and the



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rest of the crew was aimin' to do to Bill Daniels' woman, my pore sister. You knowed it, Jonse Hatfield, and you holped 'em to plot their meanness. Wisht someone would pelt the 'tarnal liver out of you!" Nancy jowered.

"Now, Nancy," argued her husband, "you know in reason I were home right here with you when the floggin' was goin' on."

"Don't give me none of your back talk, Jonse Hatfield!" railed Nancy. "You ain't got no little cry baby like Rosanna to deal with when you're facin' me. You helped kill Rosanna's three brothers and you know it. For half a copper cent I'd bust your brains right out your head with this foir poker for all the devilmint you've done—" she lifted high the heavy iron poker and leaned forward.

"Nancy," gasped Jonse, jumping from his chair and lumbering toward his enraged wife, "you ain't no call to kill me. I ain't never harmed you, and you know I never had no hand in the floggin'—"

"Don't purge [perjure] yourself no further, Jonse!" she pulled loose from him and backed again toward the stove. "You're ever out of the fryin' pan into the foir. You know full well that heifer your pa had Tom Wallace to slaughter," Nancy had something else to quarrel about, "never give no bloody milk. You knowed when that cow was clubbed dead what 'twas for."

"'Twarn't a heifer, 'twere a cow and 'twere old and couldn't drap nary nuther calf," Jonse offered lamely. "You know that, Nancy."

"You holped Tom Wallace and the rest of 'em to skin the hide offen that cow," Nancy shouted, "and you with your own hands cut off that cow's tail, knowin' full well what that crew aimed to use it for."

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Jonse slumped back in his chair, for of all the people in the world, Jonse Hatfield did fear Nancy; her tongue above all else.

"Don't give me none of your lies! You could handle sich talk to pore little Rosanna, you could ta'nt her with your runnin' after other wimmin, ta'nt her with bein' the mother of a woods colt. But me, Jonse Hatfield, I ain't never birthed no babe out of wedlock by you nor no other man. You can't throw out no sich flouts at me."

Jonse sat silent, brooding.

"And what's more," Nancy leered tantalizingly at him, threw back her pretty dark head, "I'll have you know there's plenty of men folks that have told me I'm pretty!" She had put down the poker and stood now, hands coquettishly on her hips. "There's plenty of men folks I could have by the turn of my head, if I'm a-mind to leave you, Jonse Hatfield!"

"Nancy," said Jonse at last, "whatever makes you torment me this way? You know I love you better'n everything and everybody in the whole world."

Nancy laughed scornfully. "That's why you keep grovelin' under Devil Anse's thumb, holpin' him to carry on his meanness. Act like a suckin' babe, a babe that ain't dry behint the ears yit. When your pap says jump, you jump. If Devil Anse says, 'Jonse, little boy, go flog one of them McCoy wimmin folks plumb to a pulp,' 'All right, pappy,' you make answer and trot fast as your two feet can pack you to do his biddin'. That's Jonse Hatfield! All of six foot in his sock feet like Devil Anse, and not guts enough to say, 'See here, pa! I'm through with this war! I aim to quit this fightin'! I aim to live my own life, in peace!' You ain't the guts, nor the sand in your craw, to speak your

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mind, Jonse Hatfield, to throw that in the teeth of Devil Ansel!"

"Nancy, honey," he arose and moved slowly toward her, arms outstretched. The next moment he seized her in his strong arms, kissed her lips, her throat and breast. "Nancy, you know I love you—my God, Nancy, you set me plumb on foir when I tech you." He held her closer, pressed his lips to hers. He caressed her cheeks, her throat and bosom. "Seems like I can't never kiss you enough, Nancy—seems like you just keep me plumb stirred up all the time I'm nigh you—"

Nancy wriggled from his embrace, shoved him from her. She stood gasping. "And you, Jonse Hatfield, you make my breath choke me—right in hure," she pressed a hand to her throbbing breast, "whenever you kiss me that a-way. When you hold me so clost, my head plumb whirls around—"

"Nancy—my God Almighty—" Jonse seized her again, held her tight. "Don't shove me away. You're my woman. I got a right—" he drew her down upon the cot beside him. "I aim to love you till I die, and you do too, Nancy, right hure, in my arms—"

Devil Anse always knew the signs when Jonse and Nancy had kissed and made up again. Jonse stayed away from his father's house for a while. "He's shamefaced over bein' so weak, for lettin' his woman wrop him around her finger," Devil Anse told Levicy on such occasions.

Then, one day when Jonse came in from the fields he found Nancy's brother, Jeff McCoy, sitting in the cabin. "Howdy," young Hatfield greeted the younger McCoy. Jonse tossed his hat on the floor beside his chair and sat

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down, waited for Jeff to speak, certain that the mission which had brought his brother-in-law to his house was to talk about the flogging of Jeff's sister. But today the young McCoy had something else upon his mind. After he had eaten a hearty supper of cabbage, ham, corn bread, and blackberry preserves, the three "jolted back" their chairs from the table and Jeff spoke.

"Jonse, you and Nancy, I've got somethin' to tell you." He hooked his thumbs in his galluses and looked at his brother-in-law. "Bein' as Nancy hure is on the Hatfield side now, bein' as she is Mistress Jonse Hatfield, I'm not afeared to tell you what I'm studyin' about." He paused for Jonse to speak, but that wasn't the way of Devil Anse Hatfield's folks. They waited for the other fellow to speak first, unless it was in giving orders, then they had the first say. "Well," Jeff McCoy still stared at Jonse, "I've done kilt Fred Woolford, the mail carrier over in Pike, and I've come here for shelter."

Jonse settled back in his chair, a look of relief upon his face. Then Jeff hadn't come to quarrel about his sister being flogged to death.

"You and Nancy will shelter me, I know," Jeff's fingers twitched on his galluses. "Dud and Lark said I best lay out of Pike for a while till the talk quiles down about the killin'."

He stayed that night. But even while he confessed to Jonse and Nancy, a few miles away Cap Hatfield heard of the killing, and heard too that Jeff was being protected under Jonse's roof. So Cap went to Logan and had himself sworn in as a constable and set out for Jonse's house to arrest Jeff. Cap Hatfield was chafing at the bit to get even with Jeff McCoy, who had come to his house to get Tom

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Wallace, his hired man, while Cap's woman was bedfast. Cap was ever a quarrelsome man, sullen at times, and always ready for a fight. He had made up his mind that at the first chance that came he would go after Jeff McCoy. And now the time had come. As soon as Cap was sworn in as constable he buckled on his gun and set out to get his man.

"Jeff's not here," Jonse told his brother when he called outside the door.

"Jest foller your pug nose, Cap," Nancy jeered, standing behind her husband, "and mebbe you'll find Jeff."

Cap wheeled on his horse and struck out for the mountains. For twenty-four hours he trekked through the woods, up one ridge, down another, into a hollow, down another creek, and into a deep ravine. Finally he spied a fellow warming his hands at a twig fire. Even from the back, Cap knew it was Jeff, and he crept up as stealthily as a panther and pounced on McCoy. "And you, Hurley!" Cap shouted to Jeff's companion, "stand right where you are and don't budge or I'll blow your brains out." Both prisoners were bound and led down the mountainside, Jeff stumbling along a few feet in front of Cap, who kept his gun pointed at the back of his prisoner's head. "We will meet Tom Wallace on the way," Cap said tauntingly to Jeff, as they walked along.

They did, and Tom took occasion to say jestingly, "Well, Jeff, your aim ain't what it used to be. You never grazed a harr of my head. I were inside Cap's house all the time. You surely did bust that door with your bullets, but me and Cap here would druther it wuz the door than me that tuck your bullets!" Then Cap and Tom Wallace roared.

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When the party reached a cornfield near the bank of Tug, Cap suggested that they rest a spell. So they sat down, Jeff with his hands tied behind him on one rock, and his companion Hurley a few feet away. "Boys," Cap spoke casually, "I'm goin' to gather up some chips. You boys just make yourselves at home. I'll be back directly and we'll have a nice warm little fire to gather round." He sauntered off leisurely in one direction and Tom Wallace, with equal unconcern, rambled off in another. When they were out of sight, Jeff whispered to Hurley, "Let's make a break for Tug!"

"Don't be a fool," answered Hurley. "Don't you know Cap's just givin' us the chance to get our heads shot off?"

"I can make it to the willers down yonder by Tug," Jeff answered daringly, "and I aim to try it." He wriggled and twisted until he had frayed the bindings on his wrists, then, with desperate effort, he snapped his bonds.

"For God's sake, Jeff," pleaded the frightened Hurley when McCoy straightened up, his hands free at his sides, "you're lookin' death straight in the face. Don't you know Cap Hatfield has left us here by ourselves just so's we'll both do what you've done thar? Don't be a fool, Jeff, for God-A'mighty's sake—" But Jeff dashed swift as a catamount through the corn patch to the river. He leaped into the water, swam swiftly across. And Cap Hatfield and Tom Wallace snickered in glee from where they stood concealed behind a clump of bushes. Cap waited until he saw Jeff reach the other side of Tug, saw him scramble to his feet and dash off through straggling bushes. Only a few feet had he gone when a bullet followed straight to its mark, and he fell dead.

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"A prisoner darsen try to escape the law," said Cap Hatfield when he reported the killing. "I was doin' my duty!"

Jeff's brothers Lark and Jake determined to have revenge on Cap Hatfield and Tom Wallace for the death of their brother. "And what's more, Cap," the two brothers met the constable on the road one day, "you keep away from Nancy and Jonse. Nancy will shoot you on sight. Keep away—we're warnin' you." But constable Cap Hatfield laughed in their faces and rode on.

Over in Pike County, Jeff McCoy's uncle, Perry Kline, a lawyer, went down to Frankfort to see the governor, to ask for protection and justice to the McCoy family. Perry Kline controlled the McCoy vote, which at that time was a big one in Pike County, Kentucky. The governor gave him assurances that his request would be seen to, Perry reported on his return, assurances that the law would give justice to the injured McCoy family. But Lark and Jake McCoy had little faith in the law. They took matters in their own hands. They crossed Tug into West Virginia to hunt Cap Hatfield and Tom Wallace. They found Tom; caught him unawares and clapped a paper in his hand. "You're under arrest," said Lark, "now you best come peaceable."

"This is no warrant," Tom protested, "and you ain't no right to take me."

"We're takin' you, ain't we?" jeered Lark and Jake McCoy in chorus, and off they bore their prisoner. They put him in the jail at Pikeville, the county seat of Pike County.

Soon Cap Hatfield was missed from his old haunts, and at the same time Tom Wallace disappeared from the Pikeville jail.

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When Perry Kline went to Frankfort to talk to the governor he had the McCoy vote in the palm of his hand. The governor knew the power of the McCoy vote so, to win Kline's favor, he had awards posted for several of the Hatfields, including Devil Anse. Thousands of dollars in awards were offered, but no one collected on them. Over in West Virginia, Governor "Windy" Wilson knew the power of the Hatfield vote, and did not intend to weaken his own strength in that quarter and add to the Kentucky governor's cause by playing into his hands through helping to apprehend the Hatfields. So the law was powerless in the face of the power of political intrigue. Everyone knew it, even though the words were unspoken. The McCoy's offered another reward in "cash money and plenty of it" on their own.

Some time after the killing of Jeff McCoy, a stalwart stranger swaggered into Pikeville. He had a pistol on his hip, and something else on his belt, hidden under his coat.

"Is that Lark and Jake McCoy a-standin' over yonder by the blacksmith shop?" he asked of a bystander.

"'Tain't no one else," came the quick reply. The stranger strolled over to the McCoy's.

"Lark, you, and Jake!" he addressed the brothers, "is that there reward you offered for Tom Wallace's sculp still a-holdin' good?"

"McCoy's keep their word!" the two answered.

At this the stranger threw back his coat. On his belt hung a human scalp. "I couldn't pack Tom Wallace's whole carcass, but I fetched enough so's you can be sartin he ain't goin' to beat no more wimmin to death with a cow's tail!" The eyes of the McCoy's narrowed to slits.



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Snakelike they riveted their gaze upon the gruesome evidence that dangled from the stranger's belt.

"Hit's Tom Wallace's sculp, all right!" said Jake McCoy, fingering the blood-soaked hair.

"No doubt about it!" echoed Lark. "There's the reddish brown streak runnin' through his black foretop."

They repaired to a near-by saloon and there, with several men looking on in dumb amazement, the stranger delivered to the McCoy's Tom Wallace's scalp. Tom had escaped into Virginia after Jeff McCoy had been killed by Cap Hatfield. The stranger got his reward and went merrily on his way, and no one asked whither.

It was New Year's Eve in the year 1887. Devil Anse, still embittered by the slaying of Ellison, angered at Nancy's power over his son Jonse, and still further enraged by the price on his own head which Randall McCoy and his clan had power to force from the governor of Kentucky, determined to put an end to his foe once and for all. He called his clan together. "We're goin' up on Pond Creek to-night!" he said, "and we'll drap Old Ran'll and putt an end to all this!"

With guns over shoulders the Hatfields rode forth silently in the moonlight, Devil Anse astride his blaze-faced nag in the lead, headed for Pond Fork of Blackberry Creek. With them was Cotton Top Mounts, his flaxen head, for he had shoved back his wide-brimmed felt, showing clearly in the moonlight. At his side rode Tom Mitchell. They surrounded Randall McCoy's house.

"Hallo, Randall! Come out hure!" shouted Cotton Top. The crew had their guns leveled at the door.

Slowly, cautiously, the door opened. Young Allifair, just

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fifteen, stood on the threshold. She lifted her hands ever so slightly in supplication. "Pa ain't here," she said in a trembling voice. "Just us wimmin folks, me and ma and Josephine and Little Adelaide, and the grandun, Tolbert's little boy."

Behind the door stood Old Randall and his son Calvin, guns leveled at Cotton Top. Sarah with the two girls and her grandchild huddled in the chimney corner. She peeped above the jam rock, and could see the grim circle of Hatfields out in the foreyard.

"You're tellin' a lie, Allifair!" shouted Cotton Top, and pulling the trigger of his gun he shot the fifteen-year-old girl dead. Swift hands dragged the lifeless body inside, shut the door, barred it.

"You might as well come on out!" shouted a Hatfield. "Don't hide behind the petticoats of your wimmin, Ran'll!" they taunted.

Indoors, Old Randall McCoy and his son Calvin, Jim being away from home at the time, stood shoulder to shoulder, guns cocked. Like men of stone they stood looking helplessly at Allifair, dead at their feet. Suddenly glancing upward at a sound they saw a shingle being torn from the roof. Swiftly a hand thrust into the opening a lighted pine torch. The flame lapped the dry roof like paper. Old Randall leaped to the wall ladder and tried desperately to beat out the flame with the butt of his gun. Calvin, passing his gun to Josephine, reached for the gourd dipper that stood in the water bucket on a table close by. He dashed another and another dipper of water on the flames, but the fire was gaining headway. The water bucket empty, he turned to a barrel which had been filled to tide them over long winter days in case of an

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attack, for they lived in dread and uncertainty. "Never can tell when Devil Anse will break loose," Old Randall had warned his family. "We've got to have water indoors for cookin' and drinkin'."

But before the barrel was half emptied, in their confusion and the agonized sobs of his mother and the other children, Calvin upset the barrel and the water covered the floor, soaking the dress of the dead Allifair.

"The water's all gone," Calvin moaned, "what shall we do, pap?"

"Get the churn. It's full of buttermilk standing ginst the chimney rock." Randall was still beating at the flames from his perilous position on the wall ladder.

Frantic with fear, what with the shooting from the outside and the cursing of Cotton Top and the rest of Devil Anse's crew, young Calvin McCoy was making little headway against the flames on the roof. Sometimes he'd manage to dash a dipper of buttermilk on the fire but more often he missed the mark, sending the thick white stream over the walls, or to the floor where Allifair lay dead. However, old Randall, peeping through a chink hole where the mud had fallen from between the logs, got a line on one of Devil Anse's men. Tom Mitchell, with gun up-lifted, was about to fire at the door. Randall leveled his gun, pulled the trigger and shot Tom Mitchell's hand off. At the shriek of pain from Tom, who sank stunned to the ground, the Hatfields charged the door, broke it to splinters, and burst inside. Cotton Top lifted his gun and struck Sarah McCoy a terrific blow across the head. She crumpled to the floor. He stumbled over her body, left her for dead, walked headlong over the lifeless body of young Allifair, and took after Old Randall and Calvin, who had dashed out

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through the kitchen headed for a thicket. From their point of safety the two McCoys poured bullets into the Hatfield crew, but most of them went wild of their mark. Father and son were saved only by crouching behind a great boulder, the bullets of the Hatfields passing over their heads. At length Devil Anse helped Cotton Top bind Tom Mitchell's bleeding stub of a wrist, and mounting their horses, they rode back to Peter Creek.

Old Randall and Calvin saw them turn the bend in the road, for the moon was high. Then father and son crept cautiously back to the house, or what was left of it. Sarah, whom the Hatfields had left for dead, had regained consciousness and dragged herself to her feet. She had lifted the lifeless body of young Allifair, and with the aid of Josephine and Adelaide, the frightened sisters, had placed it upon the bed. The seven-year-old grandchild of the McCoys, in his terror, had crawled back under the old four poster. For a time they were terrified, thinking the Hatfields had carried the child off to be murdered as were Little Randall, Phemar and Tolbert. "Son! Son!" Old Randall cried in agony, "have they tuck you off to destroy your young life?" Then the little fellow crawled out from his hiding place and clung to his grandfather's knee. "Pappy," he sobbed, "I seen Cotton Top kill pore little Allifair. I seen him beat granny with the butt of his gun. And ginst I grow off a man," the child clenched his small fists, "I aim to shoot the heart outten that towheaded Mounts, sure as you're bornt, pappy. I aim to kill Cotton Top!"

Again the McCoys carried their dead to the burying ground atop the ridge overlooking Pond Creek. In a home-made box of pine they laid young Allifair in a grave beside her three brothers, Tolbert, Phemar and Little Randall.

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Once more the McCoys sought interference by Kentucky's governor to protect themselves and to bring the Hatfields to trial. Accordingly, in January, 1888, Governor Buckner demanded the surrender of Devil Anse. The Huntington, West Virginia, newspapers, under date of January 28, 1888, published a story of the governor's action, with a reproduction of the official printed reward of five hundred dollars for "Capt. Anderson Hatfield" included in the thrilling account under scare heads that streamed across the front page of the daily.

When officers and detectives approached the house of Devil Anse he said it annoyed him. He went after one of the detectives and had him jailed. He told others, who were glad enough to get away whole, "Men, when you want to come after me again, let me know and I'll meet you half way atop the ridge, with a pine torch in one hand and a gun in the other." Others tried to get the old clansman, but they too went away empty handed. Finally Devil Anse said boldly, "I want the next detective that comes snoopin' around this place."

One day, before noon, four men came riding up Peter Creek. A man hoeing on the hillside spied them in the distance. Leaning on his hoe he asked in his slow mountain fashion, "Are you lookin' for Devil Anse?"

"We are on our way to Tug," one of the men answered.

"If you ain't a-lookin' for Devil Anse, he is lookin' for you," the man with the hoe answered, and at that moment four horsemen closed in behind the strangers, as swiftly, almost as silently as if they had sprung from the ground. "Come along," they said, "we'll take you to see Devil Anse Hatfield."

The bearded leader of the Hatfield clan, gun across his

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knees, sat waiting on the stoop of his house to welcome the visitors. "Come over, men," he called across the creek, and then, as if they had sprung up out of the earth like the other four, armed men, at the sound of Devil Anse's voice, appeared from behind the house. They let down the draw-bridge and the four strangers, preceded and followed by more of Devil Anse's men, who by this time numbered a score or more, rode into the foreyard of his house. When they had dismounted, and the Hatfield clan stood in a semicircle about the visitors, Devil Anse called to his wife: "Levicy, we got company! Fetch out some vittals!"

Food was brought out on the stoop. Hot corn bread, pitchers of cold buttermilk, a great platter of fried ham and stewed dried apples, of Levicy's own making. But the Hatfields did not invite the strangers under their roof to break bread at their table!

While they ate, and Devil Anse and Levicy urged them to have more—"there's allus grub aplenty in my house," the old man said—the clan to a man laid down their guns. It was an unbreakable law with Devil Anse Hatfield.

"Have you ett your fill, men?" he asked the four strangers.

They nodded assent and praised Levicy's fine cooking.

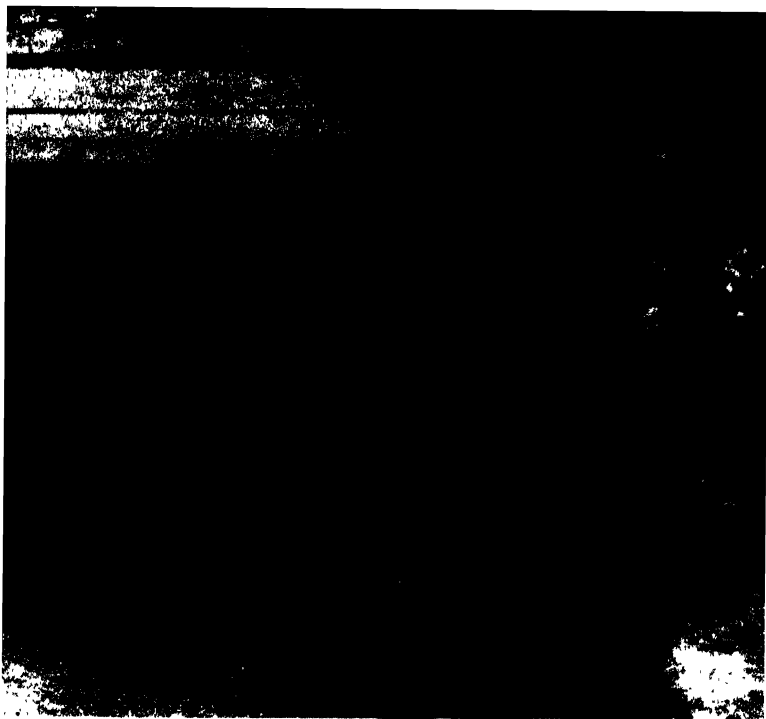
"Now!" Devil Anse had the four step before him, "what's your business here?" The four looked confusedly at each other; one mumbled something about riding to Tug. At that Devil Anse jumped to his feet, hand gripping the barrel of his gun.

"You fellers snoopin' around tryin' to get me, and you've not even got the guts to tell the truth. A lot of chicken-livered petticoats, that's what you are, the last one of you that call yourself the law!" At the sound of his



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The Hatfield clan: Devil Anse seated second from left. Elias seated right. Jonse standing third from left, Cap standing fourth from left.



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The Hatfield clan: Devil Anse seated second from left. Elias seated right. Jonse standing third from left, Cap standing fourth from left.





Jacumski

Linin' a hymn

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father's voice raised now in anger, Cap Hatfield came out of the house and stood beside him. "A brave lot of detectives you are!" Devil Anse jeered. "Not guts enough to tell the truth!"

One of the four detectives, for such they were, mumbled a sort of apology; something about doing their duty. At this Devil Anse chuckled merrily. Seeing the sudden good humor of the man whom they mortally feared, one of the strangers ventured to ask, "Captain Hatfield, if the governor would send a requisition for you, would you come?"

Devil Anse stroked his long beard and arched a shaggy brow. "I would never surrender!" Then he chuckled again as if it were indeed a great joke. "I would go to the mountains. No one would ketch me then." With that he let fly a stream of tobacco juice from the side of his bewhiskered mouth. "Tom, Mose, Floyd, John," he called the four men who had escorted the strangers to his door. "You take these men two mile down the road, or to wherever they want to go. And if they want to come back here, let 'em!" He reflected a moment, then added quite casually: "Men, if you come snoopin' around here agin, I'm not promisin' that Levicy, the woman, will putt sich a nice mess o' vittals afore you. Fact is, I'm not promisin' what I will do!"

The detectives rode with their guards across the draw-bridge, and out of sight down the road along which they had come. They lost no time in clambering on the train for Huntington, and from there took the first east-bound train that bore them safely to their destination.

It was not long until Devil Anse's brother, Elias, deserted his cabin on Tug and went to settle on Main Island

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Creek. "I want peace," the old fellow said. Finally Devil Anse himself left Tug and went twenty miles inland, settling near his brother on Main Island Creek in Logan County, West Virginia. Time after time fantastic rumors were afloat. "They've got Devil Anse!" "Devil Anse has surrendered at last!" There came a day, too, when detectives came all the way from Chicago and St. Louis and Philadelphia to get the Hatfields and claim the rich reward in cash that had been offered for their capture. And all the time Devil Anse, his sons Jonse and Cap, and their uncle, Jim Vance, were going in and out of the town of Logan unmolested.

In a measure the wrath of the McCoys had been appeased, for Val Hatfield, once a justice of the peace, had been sent to prison. The McCoys claimed Val had used his office to cloak his own meanness; some said Val pulled the trigger of his gun unnecessarily and without sufficient cause. But prison bars didn't agree with the wild and roving nature of this mountain warrior. He worried himself to death. Confinement in his cell killed Val Hatfield as surely as though a bullet had been sent through his heart. When Devil Anse got the word he said to Cap: "Get your Uncle Jim Vance and Jonse, I want to talk to 'em!"

The two factions kept watch on each other's movements. Now and then some braggadocio fellow declared he could "get the Hatfields." Such a one was Frank Phillips. Frank had lived all of his twenty-seven years in Pikeville. He knew both sides—Hatfields and McCoys. He swaggered around the town boasting, "I'll get the Hatfields yet!" at the same time displaying a couple of pistols in his belt.

"Look, Jeems!" cried Uncle Jim Vance's old woman

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one morning, "'pon my soul there are a hundred men comin' up the hill."

And sure enough there were.

"Hello, Jim!" called the leader. He was young Frank Phillips.

Old Uncle Jim Vance grabbed his gun.

And from their mountainside, Devil Anse's household got the alarm. "Pa!" shouted Cap Hatfield, "the Phillips crowd are coming down Thacker Mountain!"

Devil Anse called his clan. He had already warned Jim Vance to be on the lookout for trouble when they had talked that day after word had come of Val Hatfield's death in prison. Old Uncle Jim Vance kept on the lookout. But before Devil Anse rode into view the fight had started. Vance had mauled, chewed and clawed like a wild cat.

"Come," urged Devil Anse, "the last one of you that can pack a gun," he cried as he rode along the creek. "Ten of you men foller behind Cap, and the others of you get your horses and come with me to Thacker Mountain!"

On they rode, gaining in numbers as they went. Along the creek-bed road the horses plunged, Devil Anse, gun over shoulder, dashing on ahead.

"Are you bad hurt, Jim?" Devil Anse lumbered off his horse and hovered over Jim Vance. But the man was too far gone to speak. For all he was bleeding and shot—one bullet had all but disemboweled the old fellow—he had, with a bullet-shattered foot, tripped one of the McCoy's who plunged at him. Then old Jim Vance got the McCoy ear in his mouth and chewed it to shreds. He had reached up a clenched and bloody fist and thrust it into a McCoy mouth. But Frank Phillips, who was years younger than

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Jim Vance, came up with his gun and finished the fighter as he lay mortally wounded. Jim Vance had gasped his last when Devil Anse stooped to comfort him.

With all their craftiness and fearlessness, the Hatfields did not succeed in capturing or finishing the McCoys. So they now turned to the law. They sent word to J. M. Jackson, a Logan magistrate, asking for indictments for the murder of Jim Vance.

Some time after this, Tom Mitchell, who had lost a hand in the raid on old Randall McCoy's house when young Allifair was shot that New Year's Eve, was walking through the woods near Grapevine Creek. With him were Devil Anse, Cap Hatfield, "Indian" Hatfield, "French" Ellis and Lee White. And in order to give a legal aspect to any killing that might happen, the Hatfields were accompanied by William Dempsey, a constable of Logan County. Suddenly the underbrush seemed alive, as they were attacked by some forty-two men, all told, in ambush; another crew led by Frank Phillips, the braggadocio from Pikeville.

They fought for two hours. Cap Hatfield shot Bud McCoy. "Indian" Hatfield got shot in the head and died a few minutes later. They dragged him into the woods and continued the fray. By this time three other Hatfields had been wounded. Then, for the first time, Devil Anse showed alarm. "We've got to retreat, boys," he said to his son Cap and "French" Ellis. "We've fit nigh onto two hours and we'll be bound to retreat for a spell." Cap lifted Lee White to his shoulders and started off. Tom Mitchell—not much of a fighter any more with but one hand—was bleeding at the neck and side, though he was still able to crawl. They found shelter under a cliff.

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Out of the forty-two attackers, only seventeen were still able to shoot. Frank Phillips, who had started out so boldly, vowing he'd "drap the last one of the Hatfields," called the survivors of his crew about him. The helpless McCoys were strapped to saddles and so they left Grapevine Creek on their long journey back to Kentucky.

There were indictments, threats, warnings from both sides. It was about this time that an agent of Governor Buckner's crossed Tug and arrested Wall Hatfield.

Again Jonse vowed he was through with the war. "I aim to go to Washington State, pa," he told the old man. "I'm plumb tuckered out with this war. I aim to quile down. I've fit my last fight!" Jonse sold out his lands in Logan County for cash and tried to coax Nancy to go along with him. "Here's the money, Nancy honey," he wheedled, laying the greenbacks in her outstretched hand. "Come along. Let's leave this country. I'm plumb sick of this war!"

Nancy stuffed the money into the bosom of her dress. "Jonse, honey," she gave him a Judas kiss, "you go along and I'll come after you get a house for us to live in."

So Jonse Hatfield went away, but Nancy never followed him. Pretty Nancy had met Frank Phillips at a dance in Pikeville. She frizzed her hair and painted her cheeks with an artificial rose from her last summer's hat. She had a string of beads around her pretty throat and new store shoes and a new lawn dress. Nancy had many things from the money Jonse gave her. She and Phillips danced one set after another. It wasn't long after that until Nancy and Phillips set up housekeeping together.

With Jonse gone, his brother Cap took his place at Devil Anse's side. Cap was stocky, with a pug nose at

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which Nancy delighted to poke fun. His hair was dark and his eyes a watery blue; one eye had been injured by a cap explosion and didn't "set just right." Indeed, it gave Cap a wall-eyed look. This second son of Devil Anse was not at all like Jonse, who was, in his sober moments, of a lovable nature, while Cap was vindictive, quarrelsome.

The call of the blood was too strong for Jonse. It wasn't long until he came back to be among his own people, and it wasn't long until he was again drinking and getting into trouble. He was sent to prison.

Doc Ellis boasted of how he had captured Jonse Hatfield and turned him in. The fact was that Doc had come upon Jonse asleep in the woods, an empty whiskey jug at his side, and had hurried off to get a constable. The two had had to lift the limp Jonse into the saddle and take him to jail.

A few days later, as Doc rode along a lonely road, he looked into the barrel of Elias Hatfield's gun. Doc died of gun-shot wounds then and there.

Though Jonse was sent up to Moundsville for twelve years, he was later pardoned. His father, Devil Anse, had in the meantime been learning another way to fight. Capt. Anderson Hatfield had become a political leader in Logan County. There was an election in Logan town. John B. Floyd was running for state senator. David Straton planned to elect Floyd's opponent, Simon B. Altizer.

Devil Anse heard of it. Next morning, coming from behind a bend in the road on Island Creek, one hundred horsemen headed toward Logan town. Devil Anse, his long beard pillowed on his chest, the wide-brimmed felt low on his brow, was in the lead. To a man the riders carried guns.

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Upon reaching the courthouse in Logan, Devil Anse flung his bony leg over the nag's back and landed on two steady feet, for all he was old and his joints did creak. He stalked up the courthouse steps, gun over shoulder. "Men!" he shouted, facing the gathering which by this time had increased to twice the number of those who had ridden with him to the county seat: "Men! All in favor of John B. Floyd for state senator—step this way!"

The riders to a man leaped from their horses and stepped toward their leader. Others in the crowd, thinking fast, did likewise.

"I reckon Floyd's elected," said Devil Anse matter-of-factly. Whereupon he flung a leg over the saddle, shifted his gun to place under arm, and rode off at the head of his clan.

It was not until 1890 that Cotton Top Mounts—who had slain Allifair McCoy without a word of warning as she stood in the doorway of her home that New Year's Eve, who had tipped the jug and shot down helpless Little Randall while he tauntingly jeered, "Beg and we'll spare you"—himself was led to the gallows, on the nineteenth day of February, to pay for his life of crime. Six thousand people gathered in Pikeville for the hanging. And Cotton Top remained bold and fearless to the last. Even when the black hood was about to be fitted over his head he called out jokingly to the crowd, "I'll see you in heaven!" The trap was sprung and Mounts dangled in the air. He was pronounced dead in a few moments, and his people advanced, claimed the body, and gave it decent burial.

By this time the war seemed about over. Both leaders had invested in coal lands. Devil Anse was living quietly.



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He was becoming more and more interested in politics. Indeed he had a friend, W. A. McCorkle, an attorney, who had become governor of West Virginia, with the help of the Hatfield vote which the one-time Confederate captain controlled.

And Jonse, a shattered remnant of a once handsome and fascinating fellow, traveled a lonely road on a mud-spattered, unkempt nag. Whiskey-soaked, his eyes dulled, his shaggy hair streaked with gray, now and then he staggered into a saloon in Logan town to drown his troubles with whiskey. Life had grown irksome for Devil Anse's son. Rosanna, whom he truly loved, and their illegitimate child, lay side by side in the Hatfield burying ground, and at the very mention of her name his spirits sank. He took it as a jibe if anyone so much as spoke of her beauty, her early death. Jonse grieved little over the passing of Nancy, and concerned himself less over their two daughters.

For a long time there was no stir in Devil Anse's clan. The old warrior looked after his coal interests and strengthened his political connections. Then, on November 3, 1896, his son Cap, an officer of the law, with his little stepson, Joseph Glenn, went to Thacker to celebrate the Presidential election. A quarrel flared. Cap killed John Rutherford, and when the latter's friend, Elliott, opened fire on Hatfield, little Joseph Glenn pulled his gun and shot the man dead. Cap was sent to the jail at Huntington, West Virginia.

It was said that this killing annoyed Devil Anse for the war between his family and the McCoys had about died out. Even so, the father went to the aid of his son. The old man himself was arrested by Sheriff Keadle and taken to jail, but he was released on his promise to help

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keep peace. Little Joe Glenn was paroled. And Cap, with the aid of tools provided by friends, cut his way out of jail. The boldness of the man incensed the populace of the surrounding country. Even though Cap had been a model prisoner during his confinement, his escape didn't set well with the people generally. Furthermore, it was conceded that the Hatfields' "high-handedness and lawlessness" was distasteful, and it was recognized that even Devil Anse was losing power. Eventually the old leader's friend, McCorkle, went out as governor of West Virginia and George W. Atkinson came in.

From time to time detectives from various cities, lured by the big cash rewards still out for Devil Anse and his crew, ventured into the West Virginia hills to apprehend them. Once "Wild Bill" Napier came from the west, but Devil Anse scoffed in his face. "Now that you ax me," he looked Wild Bill in the eye, "I'll tell you what I've told t'others. I won't never surrender! I'd go out in the mountains and no one would ketch me there." The old warrior's eyes glistened with cunning.

Finally Devil Anse "got religion," and with his lifelong friend, "Uncle" Dyke Garrett, who had been with him in the Confederate army, led a silent procession one Sabbath down to the waters of Main Island Creek. Behind the old preacher and Devil Anse followed his nine sons, including Jonse and Cap. One at a time Brother Garrett baptized the Hatfields and the countryside breathed a sigh of relief. "The Hatfields have got religion. They've been baptized!" the glad news echoed up and down the Guyan Valley, it re-echoed across Tug, where so many of the clansmen had met death.

And now other troubles began to arise, troubles new to

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both Hatfields and McCoys: strife between capital and labor. The unions sought to enter the Logan coal fields, to organize the miners. For once the Hatfields and the McCoys stood together, as coal operators and miners. They did not want the miners organized—at least not according to the dictation of the union. And what with Cap Hatfield being an officer of the law, with a right to carry guns, and Don Chafin, kinsman of the Hatfields, a sheriff patrolling the mine operations in the Logan field, organizers, agitators, scab miners and strike breakers all had a tough time of it. “If we organize,” Devil Anse and Don Chafin and Cap Hatfield said, even to the governor, “we will do it in our own way.”

Troubles flared again long after Devil Anse and old Randall were through. One of the McCoys became an organizer. There were coal diggers who were the descendants of both McCoys and Hatfields who were lined up against McCoys and Hatfields who were operators. Some of both families had joined the union; others had not.

As late as 1920, another uprising in which the Hatfield family was involved stirred the whole country, but it was not in any way connected with the Hatfield-McCoy war. On May 20, 1920, Albert and Lee Felts, two of the three brothers who operated the Baldwin-Felts Detective Agency, came to Tug to evict miners who had joined the union from company-owned houses. With the detectives was Dan Cunningham, to lend a hand. Sid Hatfield, not yet thirty, slender and wiry, with deep-set, somber eyes, was a coal miner. Sid was not prosperous, like some of his kin who owned and operated coal mines. He was, however, chief of police of the village of Matewan.

When the detectives arrived they found Sid standing in

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the doorway of the commissary, sunning himself; not one hundred yards from Warm Hollow, where his kinsman Ellison Hatfield had been stabbed to death by the McCoy's, and just across Tug near by was the woods where the three McCoy brothers, Phemar, Tolbert, and Little Randall, had been riddled with Hatfield bullets. When the detectives approached Sid—after the eviction of the miners—one said: "I have a warrant for your arrest, Sid!" Hatfield took the paper offered him by detective Albert Felts and went inside to read it.

When the word was brought to Mayor Testerman in his drug store down the street that Sid was under arrest, he shouted angrily, "Why, they can't arrest Sid, he is my chief of police!" He had been drawing a soda at the time and he dropped the glass and ran to Sid's rescue. Without a word of warning, so some eye witnesses testified, when the mayor protested: "Sid has done nothing—you can't arrest him," Felts shot Testerman dead. Sid pulled his gun and killed Felts. When the smoke cleared away, nine men lay dead on the sidewalks of Matewan. Dan Cunningham had seventeen bullets in his body. Sid shot three of the detectives, and was himself only wounded. Some of the detectives plunged into Tug, swimming for the Kentucky shore.

A year later, Sid Hatfield was summoned to Welch, West Virginia, to stand trial. Assured that there would be no violence, Sid and Ed Chambers, who had also been involved in the trouble at Matewan the previous May, went unarmed. But as Sid Hatfield walked up the courthouse steps on August 1, 1921, several men leaped from behind the pillars near the doorway and shot him to death.

Twenty days after Sid's death, troubles in Logan County

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and at other West Virginia mines reached a dangerous peak. Forty persons were killed in Logan, and Don Chafin's men held vigil over a twenty-mile area, with special reinforcements at Crooked Creek, Mill Creek, and Blair Mountain. Battles ensued equal to those of Civil War days.

And so the Hatfield-McCoy troubles ended in an industrial war!

Hatfields and McCoys did make peace. They worked together as coal operators. The coal troubles were eventually adjusted. Devil Anse's son Elliott, who never engaged in any of the strife, became a successful doctor in Charleston, West Virginia. Joe was a respected officer of the law and man of public affairs in Logan County. Cap, who once told me, facetiously, "I have only one machine gun and half a dozen rifles now. I am a man of peace," later died in a Baltimore hospital of some organic trouble. Jonse, a pitiable figure, broken in health and in spirit, while riding a lonely trail through the mountains "to court another pretty woman," so it was told to me, was stricken with a heart attack and tumbled dead from the saddle. "'Pears like the war kinda turned the pore feller's wits," old Aunt Mary Downs used to say. No, Jonse was not a gallant enough figure to deserve comparison with Romeo, although Rosanna remains for me a pathetic Juliet of the mountains.

"Oncet Devil Anse come to our house," Bud McCoy, who had been a child at the time, told me. "I ricollect it well. Pa and ma was in the kitchen. Ma was churnin' and pa was mendin' a piece of harness.

"'Lark,' says Devil Anse as he stepped up to the open door, 'I jest thought I'd set a spell if you and your

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old woman don't mind.' Pa was surprised, but calm.

"'Make yourself easy,' says pa, and drug him up a chair. Devil Anse set down and begun to talk on religion, and on baptizin' a-savin' the souls of them that repented. But pa knowed full well the crafty ways of the Hatfields, so he never set down his own self. He stood up ginst the door jamb. There was a gun in the wall hooks over the door and pa 'laowd if Devil Anse started trouble he could grab his gun. Then Devil Anse went on talkin' about his boys.

"'Jonse and Cap blame me for leadin' 'em into all this trouble! Why, a man's boys ain't no right to blame their pa. Boys has a right to obey their parents,' he argued for hisself. But pa never made no answer. He didn't know what Hatfield might be plottin' right then in his mind.

"Nohow, ma asked Devil Anse to stay and eat dinner with us. But seemed like he was on-easy and tirectly he picked up his hat where he had drapped it on the floor 'longside his chair and went away.

"I reckon," Bud McCoy looked thoughtfully into the fire, "I reckon there is a chance for such as him, for all he done an awful lot of stuff; there's mercy, I reckon."

One hot summer day, a few years before the Matewan troubles, when I was living on Main Island Creek, I spied, coming up the dusty road, an old man with a flowing gray beard, wearing a wide-brimmed felt. He walked with a faltering step for all his shoulders were straight. It was the height of the man—he was all of six feet tall—that caught my attention, rather than the slowness of his step. I stood watching him come along the road. As he drew nearer I saw my neighbor, a miner's wife, run out into her yard to gather in her children. "You, Rosannie," she cautioned the

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little girl, "git in this house and stay in." She dragged golden-haired Rosannie in by one hand, the baby brother by the other, looking back a time or two fearfully over her shoulder at the old man coming up the road.

When the old man reached the great oak that stood across the road opposite my gate he stopped. He put a hand against the gnarled trunk. Then he sat down wearily on the grass and began to fan himself with his wide-brimmed hat. Beside him was a clump of papaw bushes. He plucked a handful of the leaves and began to fasten them together with twigs until he had formed them into a leafy cap which he placed inside the crown of his hat. I had often seen old mountain men do this "to keep off sun-stroke." At the sight of the weary traveler filling his hat crown with green leaves I hurried down to the gate. "Uncle," I called to the old man, knowing the way of mountain folk, "this is too hot a day for a man of your years to be out on the road on foot."

He looked at me a bit bewildered but he did not speak. I unlatched the gate and crossed the road for it seemed to me the old man was about overcome with heat. "Let me get you a drink of water," I said.

With a brave effort he pulled himself together. "I'll be all right tirectly," he murmured.

I was about to call my neighbor, the miner's wife, to help me lead the old man to my house, when glancing in her direction I saw her standing in her kitchen door motioning wildy to me. Her face was drawn with concern, which, I took it, had something to do with the old traveler. But here was an old man suffering from being out in the hot sun. I turned my back to her warning gestures and led the old fellow up the gravel walk to my front stoop. He

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slumped into a chair. "Uncle," I coaxed, "I'm going to get you a glass of cold buttermilk and some bread and butter. Maybe a snack would do you good."

"'Pon my word," he said feebly, and a friendly light came to his faded eyes, when I brought out the tray, "this putts me in mind of Levicy, that time when them smart-alec detectives come to our place on Tug."

The miner's wife next door was again at the kitchen door calling frantically to her little girl, who had slipped out and was now peeping around the corner of my house, eyeing my old visitor curiously. "Rosannie! hure me? Come in hure this minnit!"

"Rosannie!" echoed the old man. "Rosannie—" he repeated slowly. "Woman," he turned to me, "I knowed a fair lass one day that wore that name. My boy Jonse loved her. I'd ort not to a-stood in their way. Levicy named it to me a time or two but I were headstrong, wouldn't heed her warnin'. 'Anse,' Levicy says to me, 'there's no harm in Rosannie. She's pretty as a posey. Jonse loves her. Mebbe if you give consent and let 'em be j'ined in wedlock there'll be peace.' But I were proud."

I dropped the pitcher of buttermilk from my trembling hand. The wayfarer at my threshold was Devil Anse Hatfield!

While I lived in Logan County I came to know Captain Anderson Hatfield and his wife Levicy quite well; I talked with them many times. The last time I saw the old man was on an autumn day. The mountainsides were beautiful and we stopped along the path by the creek; he was headed toward Logan town, I in the opposite direction. "Howdy, Woman!" he greeted. "'Tis for a fact a pretty day for a body to be out. Look at them leaves yonder on the trees,



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scarlet red, and golden brown. Wisht I could rove these mountains oncet agin. I have tracked many a b'ar and deer in my young day when all this was mostly a wilderness." He rambled on, as old men will: "A body gets to studyin' as they git nigher the grave. I've made my peace. I've been down into the waters of baptism, me and all my boys. Nohow, me nor none of mine never hurt no one first."

Fate decreed that Devil Anse should die a natural death, and that his nine boys should escape the guns of the McCoys, though two of his sons were slain, in manhood, in 1911, by some Italian "brought-on" miners in a bar-room squabble, which had no bearing on the Hatfield-McCoy war.

Devil Anse died in 1921, and Levicy ended her troubles not long afterward. She, with a mother's love, must have suffered a thousand deaths in those days of fear and terror and killing on Peter Creek, on Blackberry and Grapevine. She, like Sarah, the wife of Old Randall McCoy, whose boys were slain by Levicy Hatfield's men folk, had known the anguish of all of them.

As for the leader of the McCoys, Old Randall died at the age of ninety, many years before Devil Anse, since Old Randall was twenty years the elder, although his sworn foe passed at eighty-three. Old Randall nursed his bitter grief to the last. "They had no call to shoot down my three boys, Tolbert, Phemar, and Little Randall, without givin' 'em a chanct. Bound hand and foot wuz my boys, with no chanct to save theirselves." In desperation and wild with grief Old Randall once seized his long-barreled gun and struck out to "sarch for Devil Anse. I'm sarchin'," he declared, "for to get six foot of devil and one hundred and eighty pound of hell."

## 9. CLERGY, LAW, AND MEDICINE

ON A HOT SUMMER DAY WE WERE RIDING IN A JOLT wagon along a winding road on Levisa Fork, a lawyer from the county seat, his young assistant, Curt Walker, just through law school, a deputy clerk, and myself. We were to take statements of land owners concerning a certain right of way through that part of the Big Sandy country. When our wagon wasn't bumping in and out of ruts in the creek-bed, we were enveloped in clouds of dust on the high rocky road that skirted the mountainside. The men muttered, mopped their faces, fanned with their wide-brimmed felts. Curt, "the young limb of the law" (that was the name the judge jestingly gave him) more than once would have lost his new straw hat when we jolted along except for the black silk cord that circled its crown and terminated in a small black knob slipped through the buttonhole in the lapel of his striped coat. "Hell of a rough road," I heard him mutter now and again as we jolted laboriously on our way. Curt, we all knew, had "got above his raisin'" since he had been away to school in the Blue Grass; was ashamed to own down there that he was born of the Kentucky mountains. He had become an out-and-out hill billy, ready to jeer at his own mountain people.

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As we jolted along the road he'd try to make light of such fogey ways of travel. And holding fast to both sides of the hickory chair in which he sat beside me in the wagon bed, he'd whistle a gay popular air. We all knew the words even though it was long before the days of enlightening radio.

Suddenly the shrill notes of his jaunty tune were cut short as, off in the distance, he saw ride into view an unusual figure. Seated on a sure-footed mule, it was an old man, silver-haired. He wore the usual wide-brimmed felt, but an uncommon feature of his costume was a white collar turned backward above his somber coat of black. Most distinctive feature of all, however, was the serene blue of the friendly eyes that looked out of the silver-fringed face.

"Hey!" said Curt, "look out, boys! Here comes the parson! Best have on your Sunday-go-to-meetin' manners!" Tongue in cheek he smirked.

"That's Brother Zepheniah Meek!" said the driver, a rugged mountain man, flashing a disapproving look at Curt. "No better Christian than Brother Zepheniah Meek ever sat foot in a meetin' house." By this time the rider was close enough to lean from his saddle and lay a gentle, detaining hand upon the rein of the "nigh nag" of our team.

"Brothers! Did I hear someone say something about meeting?" he asked with a kindly smile. "Why not? Was not God's first temple the forest?" Then and there he drew up by the roadside, dismounted, and took from the dusty saddle bags a Bible. "Come!" he invited, leading the way to the shade of two giant trees, with far-reaching limbs, that stood side by side on the ridge as if waiting to welcome us. "Here under these trees of heaven," he

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said solemnly, "let us stop by the wayside for a word with the Master."

Brother Zepheniah Meek had not looked backward to see if we were following. He seemed to know that we would. The last one of us, even to Curt, had climbed out of the wagon and were now gathered about our leader. The men, all but Curt, stood with heads bared, waiting reverently. Curt stood on the fringe of the circle, in an indifferent, half-mocking pose, until the driver nudged him with his elbow, and the young hill billy hastily removed his new straw sailor.

Then Brother Zepheniah Meek spoke. "I'll take my text from Revelation—the twenty-second chapter, first to seventeenth verses. For," he added, "there are sermons no end from there on to the end of Revelation." He raised his eyes from the book to the waters of Levisa Fork flowing below. "'And he showed me a river of water of life,'" the deep, musical voice intoned the words, "'bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the midst of the street thereof. And on this side of the river and on that was the tree of life, bearing twelve manner of fruits . . . and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. . . .'"

Earnestly he read of how there should be peace and understanding among people . . . how there should one day be no night nor need of candle, neither the light of the sun: "'for the Lord God shall give them light.'" And then he spoke of the beauty of the land about, of the blessings that had been heaped upon "this Big Sandy country in every tree and rock, and its riches under the earth." Again he read from the Book: "'Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to render to each man according as his

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work is.' ” Softly he spoke now, dwelling upon the task of this one, the labors of that one, the one duty of all of us. “ ‘Blessed are they that wash their robes,’ ” he read in a firm, an eloquent voice, “ ‘that they may have right to come to the tree of life, and may enter in by the gates into the city.’ ” He closed the Book, held it reverently upon his breast, “ ‘Without are the dogs, and the sorcerers . . . and everyone that loveth and maketh a lie.’ ”

Though I could not be sure, I thought I saw a new expression in Curt’s face, scoffing Curt who was trying to be something he really wasn’t. I’m sure I saw the rugged mountain man, the driver of our jolt wagon, look far down on Levisa Fork with pride as Brother Zepheniah Meek said in a voice rich and resonant, “My brothers, have you ever stopped to think of our abundant blessings here in the Big Sandy country? The river,” he too looked off at the stream, and we followed his gaze as we stood there under the far-reaching branches of the trees of heaven, “the river, and the hills and the forests and the land,” he cried exultantly. He lifted his hand as if in benediction. “Majestical is the Big Sandy! A mighty river that has brought us out of the wilderness into a land that’s wide and fertile and bright and abundant. . . .”

On the rest of our journey Curt offered not another word of mockery or scoffing. And long afterward I learned that the “young limb of the law” forsook that vocation altogether to become—like Brother Zepheniah Meek—an apostle of the Book. Curt told it himself when he was ordained that it was because of the “meetin’ ” at the wayside and Brother Meek’s sermon as he stood, Book in hand, under the trees of heaven. The trees are still standing high on the ridge overlooking Levisa Fork, though Brother

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Zepheniah Meek is no longer among us. His influence lives on among the men and women who knew him. "It is faith like Zepheniah Meek's that has brought peace, and burial of hatred and vengeance in the mountains," they who knew him will tell you.

He was born in Johnson County in 1833. He married Mary Jane Davis of Floyd County, and was the father of eight children. He died in 1908, and his wife survived him only four years. Such are the short and simple annals of this humble man.

Zepheniah Meek rode the unbeaten trail with his Bible in his saddle bags, staying the night wherever darkness overtook him. He always found a welcome. His resonant voice intoned in many a windowless cabin the songs of David, the assurance of forgiveness, the promise of eternal life he read from the books of John and Luke to his eager listeners.

"From his father he inherited a fine mentality, from his mother the deep religious spirit which influenced his whole life. Zepheniah Meek was a man of religious independence which manifested itself early in his life," said his friend William Ely.

"For in his youth he passed by the door of his own church to unite himself with another creed of broader views." In his early married life he lived in Paintsville, Johnson County. He taught school, was circuit court clerk, and always laid by something of his earnings which he invested in land. Always fond of books, so well had he applied himself to them, the limited number available in the country then, by the time he reached manhood he was licensed to preach as a "local or lay preacher in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South; the only organization of

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Methodism above Louisa, from the separation in 1844 to the time of the war in 1864.”

Meantime, the land in which he had invested brought him good returns in oil, and when he decided to move farther down Big Sandy he chose Catlettsburg, the county seat, for his dwelling. It was there, in the spring of 1867, that he started the *Christian Observer*. To assist him in the work of publication he engaged the Reverend Shadrach Hargiss. Shadrach had ability and culture, Brother Meek often told me long afterward in speaking of his earlier days, but he was penniless and also “broken in health.” Many obstacles which faced the young editor seem to have been surmounted, however, for Zepheniah was zealous, Shadrach was faithful, and what with the aid of the good editor’s daughter, Miss Hessie Meek, the religious messenger flourished. But there were still drawbacks. Having no equipment of his own, Zepheniah had to print his paper in the *Herald* office, a Democratic weekly that held forth at the county seat. There was always something going wrong to delay the weekly issue of the *Christian Observer*.

“We need equipment and need it badly,” observed Zepheniah Meek one day, “and I need a hand in this *Herald*.” Forthwith he got a hand in the *Herald* by investing some money in it, and at once he installed a power press and other equipment.

From then on—that was in 1868—under its new name, the *Central Methodist* pressed forward. Indeed, it was the good and far-reaching influence of that valiant weekly which “strengthened the cause of Southern Methodism in many conferences where it circulated,” that won for its

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editor in 1885 the degree of Doctor of Divinity from the Kentucky Military Institute at Farmdale, Kentucky.

Though the cause nearest his heart was that of religion, and writing upon religion, Zepheniah Meek was no laggard when it came to expressing his political views. Though it was not definitely known until sometime afterward, he was the contributor to the *Herald* in 1874 of many a cryptic line on matters political.

What with his editorial duties, business affairs—for he had engaged in mercantile interests, operating a feed store in Catlettsburg—and the attention required for his oil investments, Zepheniah Meek no longer held a regular pulpit. He preferred to serve as a traveling elder in his conference. This gave him the opportunity he liked best, of preaching always in a new field. In 1885 he was elected the leading delegate to the General Conference by the West Virginia Conference, which met in Richmond, Virginia, in May, 1886.

Conservative and regular in his dogma, Zepheniah was original in his expression of his views and his methods of presentation, and being, besides, a kindly, generous man, he was welcomed and loved wherever he went.

"The gospel and music go hand-in-hand," I heard him say. "I used to know of an old fellow by the name of Henry Dixon. He was a Baptist—not a Hardshell, I suppose, for many a time he carried his fiddle under one arm, his Bible under the other to meeting. He opened the meeting with a fiddle tune, not a hornpipe or a jig, but with a hymn tune. And he closed meeting the same way. Between the opening and the closing he took occasion to preach good advice to his listeners, among them many a young courting couple. Henry Dixon," observed Zepheniah Meek



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with a twinkle in his eye, "was a half century ahead of his time. He used music to bring in his hearers, drove home his sermon, and held his flock through that discourse with the assurance that it would be followed up by a fiddle tune. That fiddle tune was the tantalizing morsel at the end of the sermon. Music, of the right sort," he concluded, "has the power of a sermon, say what you will, and I'm glad Henry Dixon had the wits and the courage to take his fiddle to meeting."

Another old preacher whom I remember was Uncle Bobby Callihan—the Reverend R. D. Callihan. Many a time I received from that trembling hand a religious tract when the octogenarian had come to live in our town, since he could no longer travel the Big Sandy preaching the Word. I remember well the first time I encountered the old fellow. Stooped of shoulder, with thin gray hair that hung nearly to his shoulders, in a wide-brimmed felt and a long black cape, Uncle Bobby, with stern eyes and smooth-shaven face, reminded me of the pictures of Benjamin Franklin in our history book. I saw him the first time at the post office, where mother had sent me to ask for letters; it was long before the days of free delivery in our little mill town. He thrust into my hand a religious leaflet: "Take it to your father. Go quickly!" He commanded in a quavering voice: "Take it to your father, before it is too late!" I burst into tears then and there, for thoughtless children had taunted me with the cruel words, "Your father is an Infidel! When he dies he will burn in hell's fire!"

"Go quickly—to your father!" Uncle Bobby fixed me with a sad, stern eye as he commanded, "hasten to your father!" He kept repeating the word "father"; he didn't say "mother." "Hasten to your father!" Then Uncle Bobby

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knew; he had heard about my father! He was urging me to save him from hell's fire! Or perhaps, I thought as I stumbled along, blinded by tears, perhaps, so insistent had been Uncle Bobby's voice, so terrible the look in his deep-set eyes, some bodily harm had overtaken my father? I did haste away, sobbing the louder as I went. . . .

Long afterward I told the kindly, understanding Zephaniah Meek the story. "You need not have been troubled, you need have had no fear," he said in his genuinely Christian way. "I know your father. He is—all right—within!" Reverend Meek had placed a hand upon his breast. "In the heart, your father is all right—I'm certain of it!"

Not all judges sit in stern judgment upon the prisoner at the bar of justice, nor do they all scowl down on trembling, fearful children who for one reason or another are brought into court. When Judge George G. Bell of the County Court of Boyd County passes sentence upon an offender, even if it chances to be a gray-haired man, so concerned is the judge that the accused shall leave his court room in the right frame of mind, he removes the lid from a glass jar which he always keeps upon the bench, takes out a red-striped stick of candy, and hands it to the accused with the words: "Eat this, my friend, so you will leave with a sweet taste in your mouth." Whether he is of a mind to or not, the sentenced person invariably smiles. It may be a wry smile, slow to spread over a grim face, but it is a smile after a fashion.

Before going on the bench, Judge Bell was a practicing dentist. He made his rounds through the hills, carrying his instruments in a leather bag, until he had earned enough to set up an office. More than once a sufferer from tooth-

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ache came hurrying down a lane, holding a swollen jaw. "Doc! Doc!" the man would shout, "have you fetched your drawers?" And then and there, by the roadside, Doc Bell would open the leather bag, take out his forceps, and extract a tooth. The patients paid him with whatever they had: a couple of frying chickens, eggs, a pat of butter; sometimes they gave Doc rare treasures: petrified flowers, arrowheads, a tomahawk dug from an Indian mound; once a grateful patient gave him a flint-lock gun.

Through his wanderings in the hills, George G. Bell built up a wide acquaintance, which he maintained after he had successfully established his office. When he announced himself a candidate for county judge, it came as a great surprise—particularly to Democrats, for Judge Bell is the first Republican county judge in more than a quarter of a century in Boyd County—but his friends were numerous enough to elect him. His campaign was as original as the rest of his career. He capitalized on his name: on cut-outs in the shape of a bell he had lettered the words:

DR. BELL  
THE DENTIST  
REPUBLICAN CANDIDATE  
FOR  
COUNTY  
JUDGE

These arresting paper bells dangled from thousands of trees all over Boyd County. Doc himself admits he "clanged his clapper till he was hoarse as a frog." He won, and his terms have been distinguished enough, not only to gain him re-election, but to win him invitations to appear on radio programs. He admits that when he faced the micro-

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phone for the first time in his life, on "We the People" in New York City, he could not have been more frightened had he been before a judge on trial for his life. "Fellows," he told his cronies at the courthouse afterward, "my knees knocked together and my tongue clicked against the roof of my mouth, but no words would come out, till Gabriel Heatter smiled at me like an indulgent father. That loosed my tongue." Later he also appeared on the "Hobby Lobby" program.

His decisions are often as unusual as the cases he tries. One I recall was the case of an eleven-year-old haled into court on a delinquency charge.

"Willie," the judge leaned over the bench and asked in a kindly voice, "what made you drive your ma's calf to the county seat and sell it for fifty cents?"

"Judge," the little fellow replied earnestly, "I needed strings for my banjer."

"Let's see your banjer, Willie."

Exhibit number one was produced and admitted as evidence. It was a homemade, hand-made instrument, the frame whittled out of a solid piece of white oak. The judge examined it himself.

"Where'd you get the sounding head, Willie?"

"I ketched me a polecat." Laughter in the court embarrassed the boy and he explained hurriedly: "I tanned his hide myself with lye, and seasoned it a mite with salt."

The judge sniffed and smiled. "A polecat hide it is, Willie, and I think you might have added another pinch of salt. But it is a nice instrument, and naturally you wanted strings for it." He dismissed Willie temporarily, and called a man before him.

"You bought a calf from this lad for fifty cents?"

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"I did," the new defendant answered sullenly.

"Were you aware," there was a touch of sarcasm now in the judge's voice, "that the boy was a minor?"

The defendant shrugged uneasily. "Lots of kids has calves of their own. Their pas give 'em to 'em. I've boughten others."

"And did you think fifty cents a fair price?"

Again the man shrugged. "He named it hisself."

"Did you consider it a fair price?"

"I thought mebbe it was kind of a bargain."

"Are you prepared now to pay full value to the boy's mother for her calf?"

"Yes, sir."

The business was transacted then and there, a high price fixed by the judge and paid for the calf, and then the judge called the three parties, mother, son, and dealer, before him.

"Your 'bargain,'" he said to the dealer, "has now become a rather expensive one. Let it be a lesson to you not to take advantage of minors. Play a shrewd game, since you must, but play fair." He turned to Willie. "You're not the first person to sell what he never owned, Willie. But you see, such deals never bring a fair price and, besides, they're mighty risky. However, since this one is now satisfactory to both sides, this gentleman"—indicating the dealer—"is going to make you a present of your banjer strings as your commission." He turned to Willie's mother. "If I were you, I'd try to find a way for Willie to earn a bit of cash money in his spare time. A growing boy needs cash—not much, but a little—nowadays." The judge held out the candy jar to each in turn. "Take one," he said, "that you may know the taste of sweet in your life. Case dismissed."

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Judge Bell is a deeply religious man, and believes that only a minister of the gospel, regularly ordained and of dignified standing, should perform weddings. The "marry-in' parsons" and others with legal power to officiate at weddings took advantage of his self-adopted rule of not performing marriage ceremonies. It came to his attention that when cars with out-of-state licenses parked in the courthouse square and young couples emerged and made their way to the county clerk's office, street urchins lay in wait for their return. As the couple came out of the courthouse the urchins made a bee line for them, and the noisiest and most importunate would be seen leading the couple off to the parson who gave him a commission for each prospective bride and groom he could bring around. It was beyond the judge's jurisdiction to do anything about the "marryin' parsons," but it did not take him long to put a stop to the young runners who were commercializing what the judge considered solely a religious rite.

Another famous decision of the judge's was his punishment of a drunkard. The fellow was compelled to wear a whiskey bottle suspended from his neck by a string, but filled with harmless, and slightly bitter, tea. Under threat of a sentence at hard labor, he was obliged to drink of the tea whenever anyone looked at him, and he was required to remain in fairly public places. When the period of punishment was over, the man admitted he had been so "plagued" that whiskey had permanently lost its allure.

Though mountain folk clung to simple home remedies, of necessity, but let a child "get to ailin' bad" and away they'd go for the Old Doctor. "Ridin' fifty year up one creek and down another, winter and summer, rain or shine.

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Never was the night too dark, the snow too deep, the wind too wild nor the creek too high to keep Old Doctor from the bedside of a sick child." Many were the times he forded a creek when the surging waters were up to his nag's belly, and when no living soul could cross the turbulent stream Old Doctor had been known to devise means to get medicine to the sick, ingeniously, sometimes, as when he tied a long string to a bottle, and, on the other end, a stone which he flung across the raging creek to waiting, eager hands which drew the bottle after.

The Old Doctor was a real doctor; he had stood for his examination. In those days, however, state requirements were quite unlike what they are now; that was before it became customary for doctors to serve an apprenticeship as internes in hospitals; even hospitals and medical schools were rare by modern comparison. Then, it was the practice for an applicant to appear before an examining board of licensed doctors. The board was self-constituted, and the number of its personnel varied from time to time and place to place. Its questions, likewise, were of its own choosing, or even at the whim of individual members. If the candidate answered to the satisfaction of the board, upon payment of a fee which might be anywhere from one dollar to ten dollars to each of the members, a license to practice was issued then and there, and with "no gov'mint inte'ference."

That was how Old Doctor began. His first knowledge was gained in private study of borrowed books; after his examination he did attend a medical school for a while for a kind of post-graduate study. After fifty years, how much of his diagnosis and treatment followed what he had learned from his instructors, how much depended upon

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local remedies learned from, and beloved to, his patients, or how much of his success was owing to his understanding of the people among whom he worked, no man could say. Often his efforts were hampered by faith in old nostrums, or failure to obey his instructions, yet he worked with his people until he understood them and they trusted him. Patient, he was, always, beyond words, and especially with children, and he knew well, although he may never have studied it, the therapeutic importance of the mind, and the values of sunshine and of rest.

Taking little Emmy's hand—little Emmy wide-eyed, half delirious with fever—he began to tell her about another little girl, one he had known "long ago. Her name was Emmy, too, and she had been in a big way of play the live-long day. In door and out she kept running, though the snow was deep, and her mammy chided a time or two: 'Child, you best not romp in the snow—you might get croup, might even get fevers and have to take some of Old Doctor's medicine.' But little Emmy, she just kept runnin' and rompin' in and out. Bless you, her feet got soakin' wet and before night she had a ragin' fever. Her mother was troubled and her little brothers gathered round. 'Will Emmy get better? Will she be all right?' they asked. And their mother told them, 'Yes, Emmy will soon be all right, and she can eat gingerbread and sit by the fire and pop corn and play with her corn-shuck poppet.' (All little girls like their make-believe doll, and this little girl did too.) 'But she has to get well before she can play; we'll have to send for Old Doctor.' "

The little child stared up with wide eyes, half curious, half fearful, as the kindly Old Doctor stroked her brow.



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"We'll be bound to fix her a dose of medicine," he said gently.

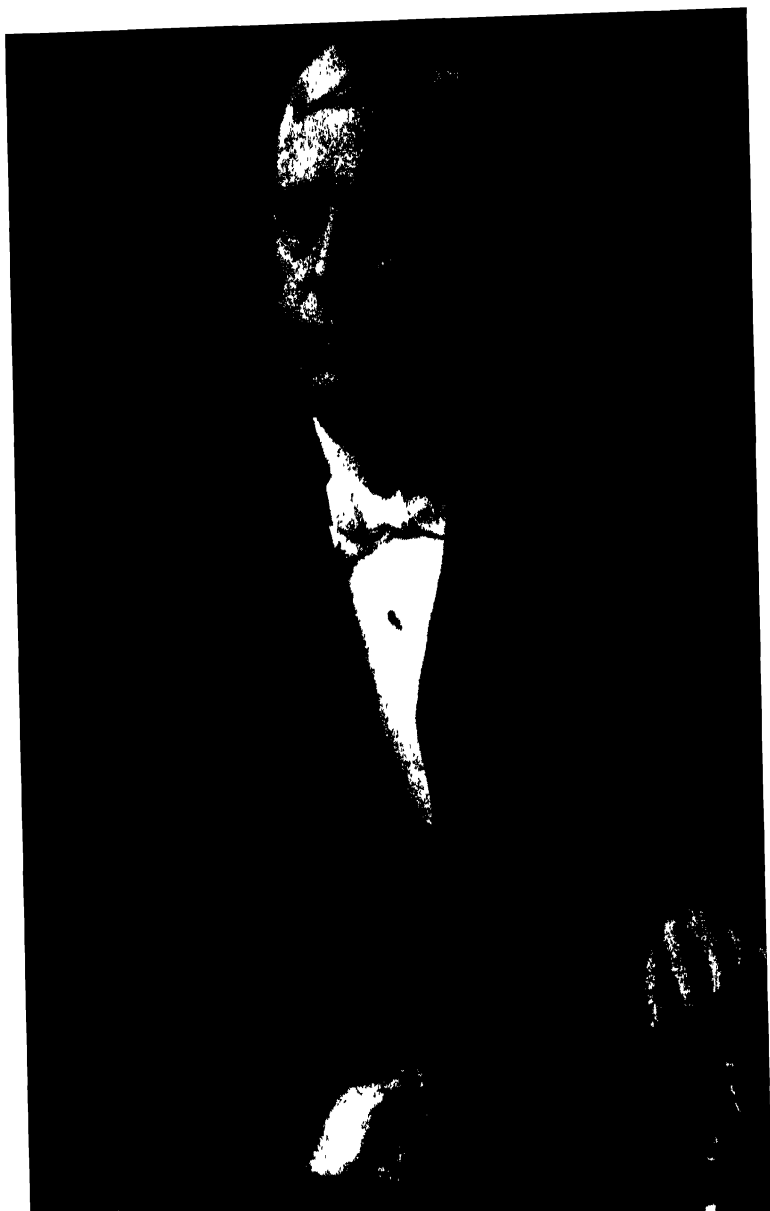
"Is it bad?" asked Emmy in a thin voice.

Her brothers had been standing shyly in the doorway, fascinated by Old Doctor's procedure, and while he told his story they sidled cautiously into the room, a step at a time so that Old Doctor wouldn't notice and send them flying, until Bobby was seated on a little stool beside Emmy's bed and thoughtful, serious Johnny stood at Old Doctor's knee. Old Doctor took no notice of them until Johnny asked, "You'll make my sister well, won't you, Old Doctor, and the medicine is not so awful bad, is it?"

"Course I'll make her well," Old Doctor spoke confidently to Johnny and turned to Emmy. "'Tain't bad at all," he told her. "You'll like it." He was squinting at the label on a blue bottle, and before she could think to protest he had poured some of the fluid into a large spoon and was holding it up for her to swallow. She took it silently, her eyes on Old Doctor's face, while her brothers watched as if they expected her to rise forthwith in an instantaneous cure. But Old Doctor knew better.

"Now just you take a bit of rest," he said, "and, come another day or two, you'll be up and about."

Such a doctor was Nelson Tatum Rice on Little Blaine Fork of Big Sandy River, and so it was that he won his way into the hearts of young and old. To the youthful his powers were mysterious and absolute, and his stories a double delight, and to their elders he was comforter, adviser and friend. Often he sat long at a bedside and, to help his patient forget his misery, told stories from history, or recollections of his pioneer days, or quoted from Shakespeare and the Bible.



Reverend Zepheniah Meek



Doctor Nelson Tatum Rice

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Often in the days of my early travels through the Big Sandy country I glimpsed the mustachioed doctor riding on his mud-spattered mule, Selam, with his saddle bags bulging with medicine. He always "tarried to ask after a body's health," or to report that Turley's folk were down with "jandis," or Simpson's were "bad off with chills and agger," and he was glad to linger while I jotted down in my notebook some of the simple cures he had collected in a lifetime of healing. For croup, he said, "use a flax-seed poultice on the chest—loosen it when nothing else well. Black silk string dipped in grease and tied around the neck is a cure an old Indian doctor told ma. I was by and heard him tell Uncle Marsh the same thing."

"You must have plenty of minor accidents to attend," I suggested. "What's good for burns and cuts and such like?"

"White liniment: that's white of eggs and hartshorn. Red liniment's cayenne pepper—"

"For burns and cuts?" I interrupted.

"God-a-mighty no! To stop pain or a hurtin' in the stum-mick!" roared the doctor as he let fly a stream of tobacco juice toward the underbrush.

For "ailments in the inners," Old Doctor recommended sarsaparilla, or "yellow root, May apple and wild-cherry-tree bark—take a span of all three. A span is like you hold between thumb and finger—but of the May apple only take three roots four inches long, for it's pizen as a sarpint. Bile 'em all together and guzzle aplenty." Not always, however, did he depend upon such complicated formulas. "Pure water is a heap o' times a healin' balm," I have heard him say.

"He's follered doctorin' this fifty-odd year on this same

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creek," his wife told me one day when I "lighted down" at her gate. "He's off somewhars now in a granny case—it's Zachariah Kinsford's woman—her sixteenth." The doctor's wife sighed, "My man tended her in her first birthin'—told her then it ort to be her last. But wimmin folk is a quare turn. 'Pears like they crave misery and sufferin'."

But a twinkle came into her eye as other recollections came to mind. "In his early days, when cash money was scarce, folk paid the doctor with all sorts of things; a dulcimer, a hand-made broom, chairs. There used to be a sayin' when neighbors would spy Zachariah Kinsford comin' up the creek with a broom in his hand, 'There's another Kinsford on the way.' Folks knowed the signs!" The old lady paused a moment. "I vow there was a time when the doctor had all of a score of brooms in the chimney corner that had never teched the floor. Couldn't wear one out before the likes of Zachariah Kinsford was comin' along with another'n—brooms and babies 'peared to plumb outdo each other."

I heard the same testimony from his patients. "He never scrouged folks for money," one of them told me. "He didn't complain if a body had no sil'er. Why, I've knowed him to refuse pay, p'int blank! Refuse, mind you, when a man's crop had failed, or his property had strayed off or died. And in his time he accepted of a broom, or chair, or poke of feathers, the promise even of the makin's of a flock tick, for his hire in fever cases and such. Though he'd just as freely a-spurned it. But Old Doctor was ever mindful of a body's feelin's. The feelin's of them that were too proud to take unless they could give."

It troubled Old Doctor to find patients who still clung to superstitions, others who feared the medical profession

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and surgery. "The time has passed," he said to me one winter day when I was snowbound in his home on Blaine, "for old granny women to put an ax under the bed to cut the pains of childbirth for a young mother." But on another occasion I wondered where he drew the line himself.

"Superstition is a destructuous thing in a body's nature. Why, I've known women whose men worked in the coal mines who have lived in anguish just because of superstitions. They ever had dread of accident. One morning Clem Owen's woman came running down to the roadside after Clem had gone to the mine. 'I had a token plain as day, Old Doctor!' she called to me. 'No sooner's Clem left the house. I saw four men all in white working in a coal bank, but the coal was not black, it were white as snow. It is a token of death, Old Doctor, I'm sartin of it.' Try as I would I couldn't pacify Clem's woman. Well, strange as it seems, it so happened that Clem and three of his mine buddies were crushed to death that very day in the mine. No one on earth could make his woman believe anything else but that the token was a forewarning. She might have had the same token in her fancy a hundred times before when nothing happened. But this time tragedy did come." Old Doctor shook his head sadly. "Another token among some of the miners is that of the flickering light of their mine-cap torches. But there is reason and logic to that. When the flame does not burn well it is often an indication that the air is bad, that there might even be black damp in the mine. That is deadly in a mine and the miners are wise to hurry out."

In his later years, Dr. Rice marveled how they had ever got along in the old days without hospitals. "I've seen a heap o' sufferin' that'd be avoided now," he would say.

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"Childbirths and sech. And accidents don't amount to shucks, until something like blood pizen sets in; then you need hospitals and all their instruments and serums. I've knowed of some lives that could have been saved, in the old days, and weren't. Today, with good roads, and hospitals not far off, they would be."

Old Doctor's homemade hickory chair is now one of the exhibits in my museum of Kentucky mountain pieces. "He got that cheer in payment for his first grannyin' scrape," his wife told me when she gave it to me. "You taken notice, Woman, how that nubbin is wore down? He ever stood there with one hand on that nubbin, a-twistin' his hand around it, when he were in a wilderness over a case that puzzled and troubled him." Apparently Old Doctor had been "in a wilderness" many times in his long career, anxious over the suffering of his patients, for one of the knobs was worn down to half the size of the other.

Another story about a mountain doctor, and an amusing one because of its reference to the Hatfield-McCoy war, was told to me by Bud McCoy. "One time I recollect when one of my sisters, I don't rightly recall whether it was Nancy or Vicy, was taken bad sick. Pa was troubled plumb frantic, for ma had done all she could with home yarbs and sich, but nothin' seemed to help the child. Pa was hurryin' out to saddle his mare and ride over the mountain to the county seat to get a medical doctor. Old Doc Slusher, the yarb doctor, was past goin', and his eyesight played out. But before pa got the saddle on his mare he saw Elliott Hatfield come ridin' up the creek. Elliott, you see, was a medical doctor. So pa called to him to light. At first Elliott kinda faltered. 'Lark,' says he, 'you don't

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aim to serve me like they served Jeff, do you?' Him and pa both knowed full well how Jeff McCoy had ben 'ticed into escapin' into the woods after Cap Hatfield, a deputy—Elliott's brother—had tied Uncle Jeff's wrists. Elliott and pa both knowed how Elliott's folks had shot Jeff McCoy down, helpless. So pa called back to Elliott, still sittin' in the saddle in front of our house. 'Ell't,' says pa, 'I wouldn't harm a harr of your head. I've got nothin' in this world agin you. You never harmed me nor mine and you can't holp what your folks has done to mine. Come in and see what you can do to holp my pore little sick girl.' "

And Dr. Elliott Hatfield, son of Devil Anse Hatfield, administered to the suffering child of Lark McCoy. She was soon well, and the father never forgot the doctor's kindness and help in his hour of need.



# 10.

## TALL TALES

**A** CULTURE IS KNOWN BY THE STORIES IT TELLS. AT present, the greatest of American legends seems to be the collection of Paul Bunyan fables. The southern equivalent of this giant lumberjack of the north woods is known as John Henry, and he appears in various times and places as river roustabout, miner, and lumberman. In the Big Sandy version, he was a workman on the railroad tunnels, specifically either the Matewan or Big Bend tunnel. In the telling of the tale, the hero's color has changed from its original black to white, and he has become, of course, a native of the Big Sandy. It is only natural that when navigation of the packets on the Big Sandy River gave way to the building of the railroad and tunnels in that region, mountain folk who forsook farmin' and loggin' would, in their singing at their new-found work, transplant the figure of the earlier black John Henry into their own song, and make one of their own stalwart number the hero of their verse.

In making a tunnel on the railroad between West Virginia and Kentucky in the days before the steam drill, a mountaineer named John Henry, so big that he could hold his son in the palm of his hand, was the champion wielder of the sledge hammer. One man held the chisel while he

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did the hammering. At last came the steam drill, and John Henry vowed he could beat it. He took a sledge hammer in each hand and had a man turning the iron chisel while he kept both hammers going, one in each hand; he pounded so fast and furiously that he did go faster than the steam drill, but in the effort he burst a blood vessel and died.

Mountain folk who sing the ballad will tell you too they knew John Henry well. "He were born on Big Sandy, fol-lered workin' on a push boat till them new contrapshuns 'ticed him off." And with that they'll sing the ballad through to the end:

When John Henry was a baby  
Sittin' on his daddy's knee,  
He said, "O the Big Bend tunnel  
Will be the death of me."

John Henry told his captain,  
"Lawd, a man ain't nothin' but a man,  
But before I'll be driv' by your old steam drill,  
Lawd, I'll die with the hammer in my hand."

John Henry walked in the tunnel  
With his captain by his side,  
But the rock so tall, John Henry so small,  
Lawd, he laid down his hammer and cried.

John Henry's captain sat on a rock,  
Says, "I believe my mountain's fallin' in."  
John Henry turned around and said,  
"It's my hammer fallin' in the wind."

John Henry said as he took his stand,  
"This will be the end of me."

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But every foot this steam drill drove  
John Henry's hammer drove three.

John Henry had a little woman,  
Her name was Polly Ann.  
When John Henry lay on his dyin' bed,  
Polly drove steel like a man.

John Henry had just one only son  
He could stand in the palm of his hand;  
The last words that John Henry said:  
"Son, don't be a steel drivin' man."

Whatever reality Paul Bunyan and John Henry may once have had has now been obscured in the improvements made upon the stories of their careers. But another character, whose historical authenticity is very well attested, has become the figure of legend: that is Davy Crockett. He was a frontiersman of the Daniel Boone type, and at first glance it is surprising that his legend should be richer than Boone's. The explanation probably lies in that Boone was a solitary, taciturn man, whereas Crockett was convivial, and always getting into scrapes which provided anecdotes for his friends. When someone suggested that he run for Congress, Crockett took the joke seriously, and ultimately was elected in the wave of democracy that swept the United States during the Jackson administrations. His autobiography, written in his words as he dictated it, is one of the most fascinating of source books on American frontier life. The man later went to Texas, and died there in the heroic defense of the Alamo.

"There are some folks, that is to say men folks, who claim they had acquaintance with Davy Crockett, was with him on his travels, hear-ed him fiddle many a tune

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when he was amongst the Indians," a mountain man told me. "Could a-happened," he added, careful to give everyone his due, "for Davy Crockett was for a fact a rovin' nature. This is just a prankin' ditty, you might say." He threw back his head and sang:

Sing a song, and sing it concernin'.  
I'll tell you where I came from  
And where I got my learnin'.  
Came from old Virginia:  
There I saw great men, prince of all statesmen,  
Second here to none;  
God, I thought my head weighed  
A least a half a ton.

Went a little further  
And I met Davy Crockett.  
I asked him where he came from  
And where he was a-goin'.  
I asked him for his gun:  
He said he was goin' gunnin';  
I asked for his knife:  
And he said he had none.

Gunned on a while,  
Creatures didn't seem to mind him.  
He stopped, stopped still,  
And never looked behind him.  
"Well," he said, "the creatures all must be dead,"  
When he saw the bark a-fallin'  
All around about his head.

I pulled out my knife  
And whetted it on a dollar.

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"Now, my Colonel Davy,  
I'll have your hide and taller."  
He pulled off his gun,  
Then off his ammunition.  
"Now, my Colonel Davy,  
I'll cool your ambition."

Then we locked horns,  
I thought my breath was gone;  
Never had such a fight  
Since the day I was born.  
Then he spied a knot  
About the size of a pumpkin.  
"Now, my Colonel Davy,  
Do you call that a-skunkin'?"

He pinned back his ears  
And puffed like a steamer.  
Now my Colonel Davy  
Screamed like a wild Injun.  
When we came to examine  
We found somethin' missin',  
He'd bit off my head  
And I had swallowed his'n.

Full a half a day,  
About agreed to stop it;  
I was badly whipped  
And so was Davy Crockett.  
Aye, aye, you little black calf,  
You need not to laugh.  
Pin back your ears  
And I'll swallow you in half.

"That Davy Crockett song ballet I heard first from old John Oldfield, who claimed to be part Cherokee—he

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looked it," said the singer. "And this lorn verse, too, he sung for me a heap o' times when he had tipped the jug:

I will tell you of a little fight I had with Davy Crockett:  
Half horse, half coon and half sky rocket;  
We fit a half a day and agreed for to stop it;  
I was pretty bad hurt and so was Davy Crockett."

The singer reflected a moment. "You know he was apt at fiddlin' a tune hisself and some claim that 'Tennessee Wagoner' was his favorite tune, that he fiddled it a heap o' times for the Indians. Left his fiddle, did Davy Crockett, to his son. His race lived in Tennessee for a time." The singer obviously knew much of the history of the colorful frontiersman and exulted in his heroic deeds. "Davy Crockett didn't fear man *nor* beast. Old John Oldfield said once a painter crept up behind Davy. He turned around quick as a wink, leapt on the painter's back, ketched it by both ears, jabbed his knees into the varmint's side, and it dove over a high clift, him astride. The clift was so high the painter was killed stark dead, but Davy Crockett! Didn't harm a hair of his head. He jumped up and down on that varmint's carcass, same as if 'twere a feather tick, and then went whistlin' on his way. I have seen the clift Davy and that painter leapt off of. There's a heap o' comical tales told of things that took place here in these mountains."

The source of a very fine legend was living in the summer of 1939 over in Elliott County, near New Foundland, in the person of Archibald Bishop, who was said to have been born in 1821, and was therefore all of a hundred and eighteen years old. Old Arch preferred the life of a hermit;

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winter and summer he roamed the hills, taking shelter in a cave, and maintained that living in the open like Daniel Boone was what kept him young. Not so very long ago some kindly neighbors wanted to provide a warm house for the old fellow, but Arch resisted their proposal vigorously, and Judge Redwine, himself past ninety, so the story goes, championed the old hermit's cause.

"Archibald Bishop can't stand being cooped up in a house of wood. You'll kill him if you put him indoors!" And Judge Redwine carried the day.

There are love legends attached to almost every little cliff along the creek beds, just as there are everywhere else in the world; legends usually about a broken-hearted girl who plunged her body down into the wide, surging stream because of a "false true love," but sometimes about a desperate maiden seeking escape from a pursuer. "There were such a girl," Elias declares, "right hereabout. See that clifty rock away off yonder? That's Castle Rock, where Lulie Vires, pore lovelorn lass, leapt down and drowned in the waters below."

I remember a tale which fascinated me in my childhood, of how a woman over on John's Creek had fought off a marauder. Alone in her crude log cabin, she was bending over the fire on her clay-and-wattle hearth when she caught the gleam of an Indian's eye spying upon her through a chink. Concealing her terror, she pretended not to see him, but instead of dropping into the kettle of boiling water the piece of venison she held in her hand, she let it fall to the hearth, as if by accident; then, stooping, she picked up instead the kettle itself, and dashed the boiling water toward the chink. Staggering backward, blinded and in pain, the Indian fell over a precipice to the rocky bed of

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John's Creek, below. So, at least, the story goes; I won't vouch for the end of it, which is just the romantic embroidery one would expect, but children will still point out the ledge, and say that it is called "Indian Rock."

Such tales are often elaborated; details, both spurious and authentic, are included in the telling, and often the legends are made into ballads. Some day they will be full-stature myths. But I have been even closer to the source of folklore many times, when a mountain man told me a story which had come down from the past in his family, or in the neighborhood, by word of mouth. Indian Joab, cook at one of the lumber camps along Big Sandy, told me one on the best authority—his own—giving names and dates.

"Many a year ago—it was a fall day in the year seventeen-ninety, before frost had come to strip bushes and trees—two brothers, Charles and Emla Millard, that lived up on Clinch River, hearin' how thick wild game was down here on Tug, come down to hunt. In them days they didn't wear garments such as these," Joab surveyed his patched wool breeches, over which he wore a tattered pair of blue overalls; his faded coat was out at the elbows and his shirt in need of buttons. "The Millards, when you come to think of it, garbed like they were in deerskin breeches and fur caps, and packin' guns and shot pokes and powder horns, looks like they had load enough without tryin' to burden theirselves with more. Been better off—Charlie would have, anyway—if they'd left part of their load behind.

"Well, nohow, they had a big time: killed a couple bear and a deer or two, and set to strippin' the big carcasses. They were crafty hunter, the Millards. They found a safe



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place, all closed in with thick underbrush and pea vines, to set to their tasks. Emla was tying the pelts into bundles, kinda dividin' up the load, one for Charlie to pack and the other for hisself, when tirectly he ketched a glimpse of a band of Indians. Well, sech men were fearless, but they had to be crafty, too, to save their own lives. Emla hushed his fingers to his lips so Charlie wouldn't let out no yells, and pointed to his brother to look off yonder to see the same that he saw—the Indians. One Indian come crawlin' from behint a bush on his all fours, slow and cautious like. The minute Emla clapped eyes on him, he up with his gun, fired! The Indian fell back stark dead. Scared the rest of the band off. They took to their heels fast as they could stumble over vines and fallen trees.

When the brothers felt secure from attack, they began their laborious journey back to Clinch, each carrying on his shoulders a huge pack of pelts. Their step wasn't as light, as when they had come down on Tug to hunt, for their load was heavier going back. When they reached a spur of John's Creek it was overflowing its banks.

"Best not try it!" Emla grabbed Charles's arm when that daring fellow, with pelts and all, was about to plunge into the water. "You can't swim with all that load you're packin'." Charles dared Emla to follow him, and in he plunged, deer and bear hides with him. Emla wasn't to be outdone. He followed the other's lead.

"Fearless they were," Indian Joab declared, "but their loads were too heavy. Charlie lost his life, though Emla was saved. They never found Charlie's body. The pelts and his heavy wearin' clothes and the shot pouch and such weighted him down to the bottom of the creek. And that's why the creek off yonder, that i'ins John's Creek, wears

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his name, though some don't call it rightly. They're keerless of their speech, sayin' Miller's Creek when they rightly should say Millard's Creek, for poor Charlie that it swoltered up."

Joab was a gay soul, for all the troubles he had had with his wife, who had left him. "But I've always made on. 'Lowed I'd not have no other woman throwin' out her flouts to me, about drammin' [drinking], and bein' part Indian from bein' descended from Jennie Wylie. That ain't no disgrace, I reckon, somethin' that happened long, long ago. As I usen to tell Corie, 'You've no right to dispraise Jennie Wylie. She had more guts than you'd have, Corie,' I says. 'She escaped from her captors and swum a creek to get back to her man.' 'I wouldn't swim no creek for no man,' Corie 'ud taynt me, 'and you mind how you speak short to me, Joab, or one of these days you'll come in from loggin' and they won't be no Corie for to jower at.' Never could hardly keep that woman pacified, not even when I'd fetch her a boughten dress from down at Catlettsburg. Time was when wimmin were pleased with little." And that reminded him of a story.

"I ricollect hearin' Granny Wylie tell of her first store dress of calicker. She and her sister were decked out in their new frocks of bright red calicker and set off to meetin'. Meetin' in a neighbor's home, for they had no church house. It was a hot summer day and the girls were packin' their new store shoes to keep them from getting dusty. They wanted to show out in their finery before the other girls and wimmin who had only frocks of linsey. On their way they passed a herd of cattle grazing, and all of a sudden one of the steers lifted its head and ketched sight of the two girls in their bright red calicker. That steer let

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out a beller that was heard plumb up to the head of the holler. That steer pawed the earth, throwed dirt clean up over its back, and then snortin' and roarin' it run like a nest of hornets had lit on its hind quarters, the whole herd roarin' and pawin' after the leader. That steer and the herd had never set eyes on a bright red calicker frock before. They were usen to see the wimmin folks in dark garmints of black or brown homespun linsey-woolsey. The sight of them bright red calicker dresses just nat'erly scared the linin' out of that steer and the herd." Old Joab chuckled at the memory.

"The two girls, they clumb a tree and screamed themselves hoarse. Meetin' had already started, but it broke up, what with the steer bellerin' and the wimmin screamin'. And old Brother Lindsay led his flock to the rescue. Thought the girls was bein' gored to death. But when they got there there wasn't hide nor hair to be seen of steer and herd. The two girls was tremblin' and snivelin' up the tree. And old Brother Lindsay, there he was, standin' with the Good Book spread out in his palm right under the tree with them two poor girls quaverin' up on the limbs, preachin' 'em a sermon. A sermon, mind you, on the sin and punishment of self-adornment. He talked some, too, on pride goin' before a fall, and the girls trembled till they nigh fell out of the branches. He said they had a right to be content with plain and somber apparel, that they had no call to deck theirselves out in gay finery. Red calicker frocks! Said he didn't blame the steer and the herd nary bit!

"After that there was prayer, and them that were safet on ground j'ined in singin' a hymn, and then the girls clumb down the tree, their store shoes hangin' over their

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arms, and stood before Brother Lindsay, humble as a sheep-killin' dog, and they told Brother Lindsay if he would but say the word they'd cast off their gay raiment—when they got home. And never wear such finery again.

"I reckon old Brother Lindsay calculated they'd learnt their lesson from bein' so bad skeert by the steer. Nohow, the girls kept their calicker frocks. But from then on they waz mindful not to pass no steers. It took all the men folks at meetin' that day to round in the herd and that plumb frantic steer. Brother Lindsay had to put off meetin' till the next Sunday, everybody was so upset. I told Corie, my woman, about bein' prideful and wantin' fine feathers. But she stomped her broom on the floor and said she didn't want to hear no yarns about a bull and a calicker frock. Said she didn't credit nary word of it. I 'lowed right then, me and Corie would come to the partin' of the ways."

Zepheniah Meek never tired telling of his early days in the Big Sandy country. Once he had looked after the "Master's work"—that always came first with Zepheniah—he never failed to gather a group about him at the fireside wherever he happened to be, and he always found a welcome wherever he went. Indeed the families in Big Sandy vied with each other to "keep the preacher." No Peter Pindar ever drew more eager listeners than this "great story teller" of the Big Sandy country.

Once when he was staying at a home on Paint Creek, after meeting was over at the church, neighbor folk gathered in after supper. They came till there wasn't a chair left around the great fireside, and the general conversation soon led around to Zepheniah's recollections of the old days.

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"I've heard mother tell of how one winter night, long ago—it was colder by far than we have it now—there was a deep snow, but that didn't keep folks from gathering at the home of their neighbor, Absalom Reeves, who had a good-sized log house over on Brushy. He was a pious man, and pious people in that day and time set aside one room of their house for the worship of God. You see they had not yet raised a church house on that creek. But now and then a preacher came through the country and held service at the home. So zealous were they to hear the Word, mothers walked for miles, carrying babes in arms, the older children following at their heels through the snow. They bundled their babes up in a blanket and placed them on the great feather bed in the corner, and sat down to enjoy the service through and through. They sang a hymn or two, then the preacher read from the Scriptures and explained many passages. If they chose, his hearers might ask questions which he explained to the best of his knowledge.

"This had been an unusually good meeting. It started early in the evening and it was all of nine o'clock before it broke up. The fire had died low, the children were rubbing their eyes with small fists to get awake; some had dozed off completely, sleepy heads upon mothers' laps. The women folk, mother among them, bestirred themselves. They wrapped up their children in the dim light of the log fire, gathered up their bundled babies asleep on the great feather bed, and with many a cheery 'good night' and 'God bless you' they all went their way.

"It was not until my mother got home that she discovered she had picked up a red-headed baby instead of her own towhead. But she was many miles away from her

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neighbor. Nor did she know just which had taken her tow-head by mistake. People had to use their wits and good judgment in those days, and they trusted each other. Mother knew that the other mother would take just as tender care of the wrong baby as she would take of her own.

“The home at which the meeting had been held was the last up the hollow, and there was but one path leading off from it. Just one path to travel. So at the crack of dawn mother set out with the red-headed baby wrapped snugly in a shawl. She and the other mother met on the narrow footpath halfway over the ridge and exchanged babies! They laughed merrily over the mistake and then retraced their steps. In those days,” Zepheniah Meek made the point, “people lived near, in thought, and spirit, and understanding. Each mother knew what the other would do. She would start at daybreak and meet the other halfway, to save a long journey through the snow.”

Brother Meek rambled easily from one story to another, and he knew no Hollywood urge for the happy ending. “One late autumn day Mark and Rufus—we’ll call these brothers by such names, for this same thing happened in other families who pioneered in this country—went into the forest to fell trees. They needed logs for a barn and for a stockade around the cabin against Indian attack. Mark’s son, a little boy about the size of young Tildon here, decided he would follow the men and watch them at their work. Children didn’t have many amusements or playthings in those days; they found their delight in everyday events, simple though they were, like the felling of trees by the ax in their father’s hand. So it was with Mark’s boy. His mother gave her consent for the child to go.

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'Mind,' she warned, 'follow the path through the cane brake just like the men folks took.' She watched from the door until the child reached the cane brake, caught a last fleeting glimpse of his little curly head above the trampled stalks as he pressed on and disappeared into the forest, then she returned to the spinning wheel, singing now and then as she tapped the wheel and stepped to and fro, spinning contentedly. Toward sunset the father and his brother returned.

"'Where's our boy?' the mother exclaimed. The two brothers stood open-mouthed.

"'Why!' gasped Mark, 'he started back at midday.' All that time mother and father each had thought the child safe with the other.

"The word passed swiftly from neighbor to neighbor, though they were long miles apart, and each quit his task, without being asked, no matter what he was doing, gathered up gun and powder horn and shot pouch and hastened to help their neighbor find his lost child. But their search was in vain. All that night they continued as best they could, some carrying lighted pine torches held aloft as they struggled through tangled vines and underbrush. But no sign did they see of the little lost child. Now and then there would be a strange sound or cry: the men stood like stone, listening anxiously. But the strange cry was only that of a wild creature, a catamount, or the far-off call of a fox.

"The parents were distracted with grief and anxiety. Long nights they lay in sleepless anguish, listening for every sound.

"'We'll hear our child if he calls. He will come back to us,' they said again and again hopefully." All the time the

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story went on, I kept hoping for, even expecting, some miraculous rescue. But Zepheniah was pitiless.

"Long months afterward they found the bones of the little fellow under a cliff. A wild beast had seized the child, the bent and broken ribs evidenced that, and dragged the helpless little one off to its den, devoured it completely, leaving only a heap of bones to lie there in the great dark cave."

Zepheniah Meek made a point of every story he told. "Children today should appreciate all their blessings. There are cleared roads and paths to travel upon, and wild beasts no longer prowl the forest to terrorize them and their parents."

And now his story turned to that of a little girl. "Her name was Sally, let us say, for many little girls have borne that name and many, no doubt, have done as this child did, or perhaps something similar, through lack of knowledge. Sally's father had come to the Big Sandy from the east, preceding her and her mother by some long months. But at last he sent for them to join him. It took many a day from the time they left their home in Pennsylvania to arrive at the mouth of Big Sandy. There they stayed at the old Catlett House, a famous old inn where in his time Henry Clay and other noted statesmen tarried when the stage coach in which they traveled from the Blue Grass had halted, on the way to Virginia, to change horses. Weary travelers were refreshed with good food which Horatio Catlett put before his guests at the inn of which he was the genial keeper. So here Sally and her mother stayed until a packet should arrive along the river to carry them on up the Big Sandy. That very first evening for supper they passed around the table hot roast venison and



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wild honey. This delighted little Sally, but when they passed to her a plate of hot corn bread the child cried petulantly, 'No! no! I don't eat chicken feed.' Her mother blushed in embarrassment, and the servant who stood beside the little miss, offering the tempting dish, gaped in perplexity. You see," Brother Meek laughed at the thought of the child's ignorance, "the little visitor from the east had never before seen corn bread, and did not know what a grand treat she had missed."

"Corn bread," put in young Tildon, "is the finest grub they are—corn bread and honey and sorghum."

Next, Brother Meek told about the man who made a plowshare from a broken iron kettle and how, one day when he was plowing on a plot of land which a neighbor had helped him to clear, the plow struck a snag. "Tug as he would he could not move the thing, whatever it was, so he proceeded to examine it. John began to dig, and what do you suppose he found? An Indian stone vessel. In it was buried a tomahawk, a flesher—that's a blunt, two-edged knife that the Indians used to scrape the flesh from hides of bear, deer, panther and buffalo they killed in the hunt. All such once roved these mountains, and wild turkey, too, were plentiful. Well, with these old relics there was something else in the deep stone vessel: a wedge! A golden wedge! But John was much more concerned with planting corn than he was with the golden wedge, so he gave it to the blacksmith in exchange for a new plowshare. The blacksmith, who was just as innocent as John of the worth of the golden wedge, used it," Brother Meek laughed heartily, "for brazing metal in his shop. Ha! ha!" the good man held his sides, "'Where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise!'"

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There was another story of the frontier which he recalled this night. "Rachel, a beautiful girl just turned fifteen, was one day digging ginseng on a wooded mountainside. It was in the fall of the year, for that is the best season to hunt this valuable root from which learned men make medicine. Rachel was so elated at her good fortune in finding suddenly an unusually big bunch of roots, she put down the little short-handled hoe with which she had unearthed the treasure and began to dig aside the soft earth with both hands. So bent was she upon her happy task she was not aware of the glistening black eyes of an Indian watching her from a thicket. His moccasined feet quite silenced the red man's stealthy steps. He crouched low, sneaking up on her slyly, soft-footed, and pounced upon her swift as a panther. With one big hand over her mouth to stifle her screams, the Indian bore Rachel swiftly away through the forest.

"For eight long years the parents searched for their daughter. But finally they gave up in despair. 'Let us think that she is dead—that our fair Rachel rests where nothing can harm her,' they said at last. But even so, the father continued to search when he went hunting with his neighbors for fox and catamount, for it was by the pelts of fur-bearing animals that he earned a living.

"It was early autumn, and Rachel's father had set out again on the hunt with several of his neighbors. Somehow, he never knew what it was that led him on, he became separated from the rest. He even crossed a wide fork of Paint Creek, a fork which he had never remembered seeing before. He plunged on and on deep into the forest. Sometimes he would have to cut his way through a tangle of underbrush and vines with the strong, sharp knife which

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he carried in his leather belt, a long knife it was, the blade being all of a hand's length.

"Well, after wandering through the forest, Rachel's father," continued this "great story teller," "found himself upon the banks of a beautiful stream. There were clusters of wild honeysuckle and beautiful lacy fern, and brilliant leafed wahoo bushes all about. Bright scarlet were the leaves of the wahoo—that is the Indian's way of saying 'burning bush'—and indeed the foliage of these bushes was as bright and gay and varicolored as the feathers of an Indian chieftain's headdress. Bright scarlet and golden brown were the leaves of the bushes all about. The hunter, with one hand upon the sharp knife in his belt, the other clutching the flintlock gun over his shoulder, stood gazing upon the beauty around him when suddenly, off in the distance, he was sure he saw moving between the bright bushes a figure. No, not one, but two. They emerged from the forest and made their way swiftly to the stream. 'They are Indian lasses!' he murmured under his breath as he appraised their gaily beaded doeskin dress, the brightly beaded moccasins that covered shapely feet, the bright red feathers that topped their dark braids. 'And their cheeks, how bright with paint!' There was much colored clay in the soil of the country; it was from this colored clay that Paint Creek got its name," Zepheniah explained to us, "and the Indians reveled in painting their bodies with it. They even painted cliffs and tree trunks. If you go deep into the forest, the uncut forest around here, you can still find traces of the Indians' picture language on many a mighty oak! But now, to get back to the two pretty Indian maidens down at the water's edge in their gaily colored attire. Between them they carried an earthen pitcher. They

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stooped and filled it with water from the clear stream. Then one, the taller, more slender, arose while the other still knelt with the pitcher. The taller lass stood now with arms uplifted, breathing deeply the sweet fragrance of honeysuckle and laurel about her.

“‘It is Rachel!’ the father gasped, and for a moment he stood as if he had been turned to stone. But there was no time to lose. He leaped from his hiding place, pulled the short knife from his belt, stabbed the kneeling girl—the Indian—and seizing his own dear daughter—for it was Rachel, indeed—he bore her off swiftly to a place of safety. Only a few moments did they tarry while she snatched the gay feathers from her hair, coiled her long braids up about her head and wiped the paint from her face. The paint which her Indian captors had compelled her to wear so that she would appear like one of their tribe.”

If Brother Meek pointed this tale with a moral, I cannot now think what it could have been. Certainly the father treated the Indian lass more harshly than his own daughter had fared at the hands of her captors. I am convinced that the story had a basis in truth; there were numerous cases of such captivity in frontier days, although some of the details of this one seem to be inaccurate. It was the custom for warriors to paint themselves when on the warpath, but they were not always painted, and Indian women never. But that was a detail which added interest to the story for his hearers, and if the story were to continue to be retold, repetitions would delete such unsatisfactory details, add others, and change the shape of the tale until it became a fable of heroism, devotion, or revenge.

# 11.

## FESTIVAL

**I**N JUNE, WHEN SKIES ARE FAIR AND WOODLANDS GREEN, follow the winding Mayo Trail through the foothills of Kentucky to a tiny, windowless cabin in a quiet hollow on Four Mile Fork of Garner. For here, on the second Sunday in June, mountain minstrels gather to re-create the centuries-old tradition of the mountains of the Singin' Gatherin'; to sing the simple song of their fathers handed down by word of mouth from generation to generation. On a great rustic stage, with the crude log cabin for a background, the minstrels old and young sit grouped on primitive, backless benches; above is the canopy of heaven, and around about, high hills rise that give back the echo of warning and wassail song, winders, sea chanteys, frolic and lonesome tunes, play-game songs and gay ditties to the muted strain of fiddle and dulcimer, of harp and flute. A Singin' Gatherin', bless you, just as I came upon it years ago at Uncle Abner's cabin on Brushy Fork of Lonesome Creek, when I was traipsin' through the mountains with the judge and a passel of lawyers from one courthouse to another in the capacity of court stenographer. The Singin' Gatherin' is reproduced year after year just as I came upon it that first time in Uncle Abner's foreyard in front of his log cabin.

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Promptly at the hour of two, a mountain man, tall, loose-limbed, appears in the cabin door and, lifting a fox horn to his lips, blows a lusty call. Then slowly over the brow of the hill a covered wagon comes into view. On the high seat beneath the flapping canvas top sits a descendant of the first settler who, in like manner, rode into the wilderness years ago. Beside him, dressed in somber frock of linsey-woolsey sits his wife, hands clasped in lap, her dark eyes peering apprehensively from beneath a dilapidated slat bonnet. Following the covered wagon is a later-day coach from which alight ladies in hoop skirts, stays, and headdress of Civil War days. As they make their way toward the cabin, suddenly down the opposite hillside comes an Indian lass singing in native tongue the Cherokee harvest song, a bit early in the season, perhaps, but typifying the red man's welcome to the white. When her last note dies away, a piper, in plumed hat and velvet tunic, wends his way along the wooded path, a bevy of children in traditional dress of old Lincolnshire trooping at his heels. At length they reach the rustic stage and here they step to the piper's tune a folk dance which survives to this very day in the Kentucky mountains and in rural England alike. In gaily colored dresses and bright ribbons, with bells at wrists and knees, the children dance while the piper leans carelessly against a great oak near the center of the stage. To and fro they trip and sway, forming many a pretty pattern and at last, with hands over head and a lusty "Hurrah!" just as the pioneers danced the selfsame tune, the children and the piper disappear within the cabin.

And now come the "ladies-in-waiting" in full-skirted, tight-bodiced frocks of black with ruff of white at neck

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and sleeve. They form a semicircle about the stage and curtsy low as the speaker of the prologue enters. She is dressed in a rich velvet costume of scarlet with heavy brocade of gold and silver; her golden coiffure is topped by a Tudor hat with flowing veil of crimson hue. About her the ladies-in-waiting form a fitting background while she speaks the prologue, recounting the origin of mountain minstrels and their song, of how they came into the wilderness of the new world to seek freedom when they grew weary of the tyranny of their kings across the sea, bringing hope in their hearts and song on their lips; ballads that their forbears had gathered from the wandering minstrels of Shakespeare's time and handed down without book or manuscript from parent to child, a treasure that would have been lost with the onward march of civilization except that these sturdy pioneers were shut off from the outside world by high mountain walls and bridgeless streams.

It is to safeguard this precious heritage that the American Folk Song Society was organized. It is to perpetuate the authentic interpretation of the song of our Anglo-Saxon forbears that the American Folk Song Festival is presented each year, a festival in which only those singers to whom the ballad has been handed down by word of mouth take part, and only those fiddlers and banjo players who have learned their art from their elders participate: men and women, boys and girls of the mountains who set forth the episodes of the traditional Singin' Gatherin' in proper sequence, beginning with the time when dancers stepped the tune at the Infare-wedding to the singing of a ballad in the absence of fiddle or flute.

Episode follows episode; scene follows scene, until finally a somber note is struck in the Singin' Gatherin'.

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Brother Dawson, or another mountain preacher, in an imposing voice, book in hand, rises and "lines" a hymn: "Will the Circle Be Unbroken?" and his brethren from Floyd, Lawrence, Johnson, Morgan, Knott, Elliott and Rowan Counties, sing in true mountain fashion the sacred words in their rich, resonant tones that blend like the notes of a giant organ.

Like a lovely flashback on the screen, a bevy of children in gay costumes of colonial days, satin and lace and powdered wigs, troop out on the stage, dancing the Virginia reel while Jilson Setters fiddles the tune and the youngsters sing "A Penny for a Spool of Thread." With the dancers holding the last figure of the Virginia reel and the ladies-in-waiting forming a semicircle across the back of the great stage, the whole gathering sings with muted accompaniment of fiddle and accordion, harp and flute, that best loved of lonesome tunes of the mountains:

Down in the valley, the valley so low,  
Hang your head over, hear the winds blow—

And tens of thousands who pack the wooded hillsides join in filling the wide valley with song.

Each year at our Singin' Gatherin' the stage is peopled with the living characters of whom I write, all mountain born and most of them from the Big Sandy. Jilson Setters, the singin' fiddler of Lost Hope Hollow, the first primitive, unlettered Kentucky mountain minstrel to cross the sea to fiddle and sing his own and Elizabethan ballads in the Royal Albert Hall in London—he went to England at the invitation of the English Folk Song Society, an organization similar to our own—has not appeared in this story



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because I have written of him before. He is always at our festival, and we have Blanche Preston, who sings sea chanteys handed down by her sea-going ancestors, Elizabeth Lovell and her three little daughters, Walter Scott, with wide-brimmed felt and flowing beard who claims kin with Sir Walter Scott, and many others. Little Bud McCoy comes to sing a ballad. He is the great-great-grandson of Harmon McCoy, who was slain far back in '63 by Devil Anse Hatfield. And beside Little Bud sits Melissa Hatfield, great-great-grandchild of the leader of the Hatfield clan, singing as lovely a Scottish answering-back ballad as you'd ever wish to hear.

Side-by-side they sit, a Hatfield and a McCoy, "peaceable-like as chicks under a hen's wing," Jilson Setters will tell you, "for when singin' comes in, fightin' goes out!" He knows full well, does this aged mountain minstrel, for he has "lived under the war of both Hatfields and McCoy's and Martins and Tollivers, off yonder in Dark Rowan." And he will tell you, too: "Our Singin' Gatherin' is a peace maker. Singin' putts folks in good heart."

From this American Folk Song Festival have grown many splendid things: music centers like that conducted by a mountain-born girl, who has participated in our Singin' Gatherin' and now conducts a music center of her own at Prestonsburg, in Floyd County, where she teaches the children not only folk songs and dances, but classical compositions as well. And recently the federal government has sponsored folk singing and dancing centers and recreational centers throughout the mountain regions.

Nor is this all that has "cropped out" of the Singin' Gatherin'. While traipsin' through the mountains in quest of minstrels and folklore I came upon a young lad one day

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at the head of Levisa Fork. Seated on a log near the water's edge he was painting the scene about him, the mountains, a crude log cabin, high, jagged rocks. He had no pallet: tin buckets contained the leavings of house and barn paint. He had just a common brush of the five-and-ten variety, which he had reduced to workable size with his pocket knife. He used sparingly of the turpentine that was in a can close by, and his canvas was a carton that had contained canned milk.

"Lackin' a canvas," he remarked good-naturedly, "I coaxed Bud Hatfield, that runs the coal commissary, to give me this paper box. I didn't rightly have to coax him," the boy was careful of the truth. "The minnit I named it to Bud what I was wantin' it for he up and emptied out every can and set 'em on the shelft so's I could have the box. A mighty accommodatin' man is Bud Hatfield."

In silence I looked on while he added the finishing touches to his painting. "This log house you see yonder on the ridge that I've tried to paint here, they do say is where Rosanna oncet stole off to meet Jonse Hatfield, her own true love." The boy's voice fell to a whisper. "And they do say if you pass along here in the dead of night you can hear Rosanna's voice, low and sorry like, singin' a lonesome tune. Though I can't rightly say from my own knowin'. I never travel this road here of a nighttime." With great care he lettered in the lower corner of his painting: "Rosanna's Tryst," by Randall McCoy Hatfield. At sight of this I was silent for a moment as scenes of heartbroken women, slain men, leaped before my eyes. Then suddenly more pleasant thoughts crowded my mind. The Singin' Gatherin', and how it had brought Hatfields and McCoys together.

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"Randall!" I cried excitedly, for in all my years of traipsin' through the mountains I have not yet learned the priceless art of mountain folk—self-control. "Randall! What would you say to bringing this painting down to the Singin' Gatherin' on the second Sunday in June, where folks can see what a mountain boy can do?"

For a moment he gaped at me in perplexity; finally he found his voice. "Woman, I darsen," he faltered. "I don't know the first thing about paintin' pictures. Though I've everly had a cravin' to do it." He looked critically at his handiwork. "I'm afeared they'd make mock of it down yonder at the Singin' Gatherin'. I've never set foot in a high school, let alone a school where they learn scholars to paint pictures. Though I've read of such. Bud's got a book about it; it's from a college. Ma aimed for me to go to college some day, but—" he looked wistfully into the distance, "—she were tuck with lung consumption when I were just turned twelve; a month to the day after pa were killed in the coal bank. Fallin' slate. Pore old Granny, she done the best by me she knowed how, but the pore old critter never favored book l'arnin' and I didn't want to contrary her. So I quit school and looked after the place and her, long as she lived. I'm nigh on to twenty year old and I've not been to the eighth grade." He lifted his eyes apprehensively to the picture. "I darsen try to show out. I don't know the first thing about paintin' pictures."

"That's just it!" I jumped up from the log where I had been sitting while he put the finishing touches on the sketch. "That's just the point," I argued excitedly, "to show what a boy can do without any training. Think, Randall," I found myself pleading, "what you could do if you had the opportunity to study with an art teacher!"

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Nor did I pause for any protest from Randall McCoy Hatfield. "We'll start a native art exhibit! At the Singin' Gatherin'! What do you say to that? No need to hide your light under a bushel. Bring your painting down to the Singin' Gatherin' on the second Sunday in June—that's less than a month off. You'll come, won't you? And we'll have a shelter built against the hillside where we'll show the paintings. And you must tell others—an exhibit of native art! Right out in the open against the hillside with the trees all about—there's lots of them at Traipsin' Woman Cabin!" I paused for breath. I could see the great, earnest eyes of Randall McCoy Hatfield widen with eager delight, and I felt hopeful my words had not fallen upon the desert air.

One day late in May that year—it was 1935—I was out at Traipsin' Woman Cabin making ready for our fifth annual Singin' Gatherin'. Suddenly I looked up from my work of planting wild flowers and fern close by the chimney rocks when I saw a young fellow coming slowly over the hill. Now and then he paused to rest. Under his arm he carried a large parcel tied up in brown wrapping paper.

As he drew nearer, slowly, with weary steps, I could see that he was pale and stooped. I could hear the tell-tale cough that comes only from the ravages of consumption.

"It's Randall McCoy Hatfield!" I cried aloud, "and he's brought 'Rosanna's Tryst!' That's what he's carrying under his arm." Remembering the ways of mountain folk I hurried to the door of my cabin and stood waiting to greet my visitor.

"Howdy!" said Randall, doffing his wide-brimmed felt and bowing with courtly manner. "You see, I've fetched

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'Rosannie's Tryst.' I was aimin' for you to have it, bein' as you taken such a fancy to what I were tryin' to do."

"Randall," I tried to show him how pleased I was, "I can never, never thank you enough for starting here at our Singin' Gatherin' our first showing of native art, by untrained artists!"

How proudly he worked that day, cutting saplings for the shelter, though he had to stop time and again to rest. The ravages of consumption had made appalling inroads on his strength. Again and again he went farther into the woodland beyond the cabin to bring out posts for the sides and roof, and when a neighbor came to lend a helping hand it took all the tact the two of us could muster to spare the feelings of Randall.

"Let me hold up this here post," urged my neighbor. "I'm no hand at drivin' nails, Ran'll. Let me set the posts!" And he heaved the heavy posts to place, lifted the ax with giant strength to shape the roof. Then Randall nailed fast the rived-oak shingles which he himself fashioned from a tree trunk with wedge and hammer. He stood to one side, surveying the finished work.

"I chose this place here for the shelter of 'Rosannie's Tryst,' and the pictures the others have promised to bring, like you said, for the whole back of the hillside here is rock with pretty moss coverin' it over. And there's a pretty bunch of ferns clingin' to the bank yonder, and pine trees clost by. It looks plumb pretty and naterl."

That year "Rosanna's Tryst" by Randall McCoy Hatfield started the first native art exhibit by untrained artists of the mountains. In a few short years, though Randall was not spared to see it, the exhibit has grown to unbelievable proportions. Young mountain-born artists from Ken-

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tucky, Tennessee and West Virginia—for we encourage them especially—bring their canvases of mountain folk and mountain scenes each year to the Singin' Gatherin', where under the shelter which Randall's eager hands fashioned, they are viewed, and often purchased, by admiring visitors. Since our first exhibit, which began with Randall's painting of "Rosanna's Tryst," several of our exhibiting artists have shown in a national art exhibit at Rockefeller Center, and another has won a national award in recognition of his work.

It is through our annual American Folk Song Festival at Traipsin' Woman Cabin on the Mayo Trail that we hope to preserve part, at least, of the unique society which is gradually disappearing under pressure of modern living and progress, and to present to visitors a true picture of this antique culture. Instead of whiskey-soaked ruffians, crouching behind bushes and trees, peering from beneath wide-brimmed felts, ruffians with blood-shot eyes and tobacco-stained beards, guns in hand, which unfair writers have pictured to the outside world for too many moons, travelers today through the Big Sandy country will find a transformed land. Giant mountains, to be sure, but crossed and recrossed now by modern highways; concrete pillars and steel girders spanning rivers and creeks.

What part of the civilization which was Big Sandy can survive modern changes is a question which is perhaps not important. Certainly many of the changes are for the better: county schools with modern equipment and trained teachers; hospitals with capable doctors and nurses, better roads, electricity.

Visitors return with enthusiastic memories of the ma-

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jestic beauty of living walls of rhododendron, pink, white and purple, of hillsides and ravines festooned with wild honeysuckle, waysides and winding trails hedged with blooming roses, scarlet-red and fair-pink, mountainsides covered with delicately tinted laurel and shell-pink moss in rounded clusters, and giant trees of heaven extending their branches of delicate blooms wide over the earth.

Spring comes just a little earlier to Kentucky than it does north of the Ohio River, and always I recommend to visitors, you may be sure, that they choose May or June to visit us, when the country is at its loveliest. When spring has come to the mountains, laurel and May apple, redbud and dogwood burst into "full blowth." Bobwhite and robin redbreast are calling to their mates from the thicket. Spring's in the air!

"Folks are hoverin' like bees around Trivitt's store. It bein' Sattiddy, they've come to do their tradin'. Men folks going in with a passel of seng roots and coming out with a poke of meal or a plowshare; the women, basket on arm, swappin' eggs for calico and bluin', sodie and coffee. Yonder comes Aunt Rimithie, follerin' behint old Uncle Dave meek as a lamb. He's made her bridle her tongue since he taken her that trip down to the level land on the railroad cars. Uncle Dave ain't wantin' his old woman to 'pear boastful and braggity."

Barefoot boys perch like crows on the railing around the store, while young Jeff Barber and Asa Kegley with guitar and banjo pick a tune and sing ballads.

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